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HE WALKS ALONE

HE WALKS ALONE

by

R. J. ELLIS.

*The public and private life of Captain
Cunningham-Reid, D.F.C., Member of
Parliament 1922-45.*



W. H. ALLEN
. LONDON.

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Frontispiece

ALEC STRATFORD CUNNINGHAM-REID

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

OWING TO CONGESTION IN THE PRINTING AND BINDING TRADES MANY MONTHS ELAPSED BETWEEN THE WRITING AND THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK. IN THE INTERVAL A GENERAL ELECTION CAME AND WENT. THE UNAVOIDABLE DELAY HAS NOT AFFECTED THE NARRATIVE AS ORIGINALLY SET DOWN. INDEED, INTERVENING EVENTS HAVE SERVED ONLY TO CONFIRM AND EMPHASISE THE INDICTMENT OF POLITICAL INTRIGUE WHICH IS THE MAIN BURDEN OF THE BOOK, AND WHICH GATHERS MOMENTUM AS THE FACTS EMERGE.

ADVANTAGE WAS TAKEN OF THE DELAY TO ADD AN EPILOGUE THAT ROUNDS OFF THE STORY.

WHY THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

RARELY has an M.P. been more derided by other politicians than dark, debonair, athletic-looking Captain Alec Stratford Cunningham-Reid, the Member for St. Marylebone, and seldom has a man been more deliberately and consistently misrepresented.

Despite his never having been a minister in any government this persistent and provocative back-bencher has been more head-lined and talked about in the past few years than half the members of the Administration. Directly or by implication, most of the headlines have been derogatory, but the talk, though adequately reflecting the headlines, has not been altogether in the same antipathetic strain.

In St. Marylebone, where, politically, the talk matters most, it expresses an opinion sharply but by no means evenly divided. I fell among it first when the subject of this record was under a cloud of obloquy following his return from America at the end of 1940. Having potted him, not too complimentarily, in a "personality" paragraph for a well-known journal, I felt a desire—fed by the number of letters that stormed into the office—to find out for my own satisfaction just what lay behind the enormous interest the paragraph had evoked.

I also had in mind the possibility of writing up the subject to a full page if the material justified such generosity in those days of severely limited space. So I began delving into the files of various newspapers, digging up his past and trying to discover what all the fuss was really about. The more I delved, the further I found it necessary to dig, and the deeper I dug the greater grew the pile of information. One fact emerged crystal-clear—his "publicity" in the social and political pages of the press must, quantitatively, equal that of almost any prominent personality during the last two decades. Much fiction was scattered among the facts in the voluminous newspaper-cuttings,

and it was in process of sifting the real from the imaginary that I found my way into the glades and shades of Marylebone.

In some quarters the mere mention of Cunningham-Reid brought down a hail of execration. In other places the polite company gave me the side-long glance sometimes cast upon the boy who thoughtlessly introduces his tadpoles at tea-table. Others to whom I spoke assumed a non-committal air. They had heard their M.P. variously castigated and as vigorously applauded but were unacquainted with his "crimes" or his accomplishments. A much larger group of assorted citizens thought they were well represented. They believed it better to have an M.P. alert enough to excite the furies in any direction rather than one too dead or too dumb to be noticed at all. Then there were the Cunningham-Reid partisans. In their view he was the victim of a vendetta, a man whose every act was maliciously misconstrued but whose services to the borough, in and out of Parliament, had in fact evoked pæans of praise all over the constituency. Naturally they would hear nothing against the man of their choice.

What these pros had to say interested me little, though the honesty of their enthusiasm might well have made the subject of it blush—assuming there was a blush left in one so accustomed to abuse. Nor did the neutrals excite much attention. I found the ordinary voters surprisingly uninformed about the man to whom they had given, or refused, their confidence, and the little to which some of them pretended was chiefly the product of prejudice engendered by one or another of the rival groups in the locality. Perhaps I should not have been surprised. I ought to have known that it is much the same in every constituency. It is one of the gravest weaknesses of our democracy that the bulk of constituents know practically nothing about their M.P.s, an ignorance which is matched in all too many instances by the M.P.s knowing nothing about their constituents. This is a defect which Parliament—or more properly the local activists—ought to remedy by seeing to it that their Member maintains, between elections, a far wider connection among his constituents than has hitherto been customary.

Deeming it a sound principle of investigation to discover a man in the minds of his enemies, I sought information chiefly among those who would have preferred that Marylebone had an M.P. other than Captain Cunningham-Reid. Here the quest was even less fruitful. Among these antis there was no lack of opinion and no reluctance to express it, but the bones of their contentions carried about as much meat as a wartime butcher's ration. All my efforts to get them down to essentials proved unavailing. Some few did venture the assertion that he had "bolted to Honolulu" in the early part of the war—an accusa-

tion documentarily refuted in the following pages—but to my enquiry as to the cause of the prior hostility they offered only the vaguest generalities.

Anxious as I was to discover the worst, I sometimes argued, hoping to elicit a positive charge. Often I put the question direct: "What have you got against him?" Cornered, their reply was almost invariably "Oh, he's so utterly impossible," or stronger words to the same unsubstantial effect. The very worst statement I managed to extract was from a prominent man well versed in the affairs and familiar with all the personalities of the borough. And what he said finally was: "He's so damned erratic!" Yet even he moderated the grand sweep of his condemnation by adding "But I admit the fellow's got guts," and in so doing he confirmed the spark of grudging admiration I had detected in the fulminations of many other opponents.

As the inquiry proceeded, the Member for Marylebone, worrying the Ministerial Benchers, continued jumping into the headlines. So frequently was he on his feet that the animus down Westminster way assumed an ever increasing intensity. Having gathered by this time a good deal about the man's background I realised, watching the scene in the Commons or reading the daily reports, that the Ministerial replies, replete as they often were with unpleasant innuendos, were calculated to foster an anti-Cunningham-Reid atmosphere rather than deal with the issues raised. This inspired me to pursue the investigation further. What lay at the back of all this venomous hostility, and why should a man so obviously esteemed by a large number of his constituents excite such extreme dislike among the Westminster highups?

With these questions insistently seeking solution, I continued exploring the newspaper files. When I had exhausted all the sources I came to the conclusion that here was something much bigger than the material for a newspaper article. Behind the story of Cunningham-Reid there lay political implications of the greatest significance for every elector in the land. The investigation had revealed how a man revolting against orthodoxy may become enmeshed in a vast web of intrigue. Here indeed was a startling commentary on the political set-up of democratic Britain. The strange case of Cunningham-Reid could only be told in a full-length book.

This volume is the result. In it the reader will, I think, find a great deal about this abused Marylebonian that he never knew before. He will find also many sidelights on the modes and habits of high life. For let it be revealed at once that the good-looking Captain Cunningham-Reid, D.F.C., a famous fighter ace of World War I and subsequently the spouse of one of the world's

wealthiest heiresses, was a vogue in the upper reaches of Society and well-placed in the parliamentary handicap before—to vary the metaphor again—he became the lone wolf in the parliamentary pack. Whether Cunningham-Reid's conduct is of a kind to merit condemnation the reader must judge for himself.

In setting down all the facts that seem worth recording, I have sometimes taken sides and have certainly resurrected many things that any man would prefer to be forgotten. Read against the social background of the past twenty years the record may afford some insight into the futilities that have in recent times passed for political wisdom in certain quarters. It may also suggest some reasons why the House of Commons is likely to remain a citadel of mediocrity unless and until the people exert themselves to bring the procedure of Parliament into line with the requirements of a fast-moving age.

That the required reforms will not be easily effected can be gathered from the obstacles deliberately thrown in the way of Cunningham-Reid's advocacy, for he, often alone, but sometimes with the support of a meagre company, has been foremost in agitating for them. Why he has done so, only he knows. What is certain is that in doing so he has fallen foul of that socialite fraternity who have always regarded Parliament as part of their privileged preserve. His greatest sin in their eyes is his apostasy. Once superbly placed for the parliamentary stakes, he had the conscience and courage to question the rules, with the result that they have persistently tried to crowd him off the course. That is what happens to a man who kicks. Here we have the essential value of the story.

A word of explanation about the text. In order to avoid the cumbrous hyphenate I have taken the liberty of referring to the subject throughout as C-R—the truncated cognomen by which he is known in the Commons—the full name only being used when cited in quotations. As it is impossible to portray an M.P. without reference to his speeches—a major form of political activity—some of them are included. To avoid holding up the narrative, however, they have for the most part been relegated to an appendix. They make easier reading than the majority of parliamentary orations and taken alone would go a long way towards explaining the ostracism that has befallen their author. Perused in the light of the record, they help to illustrate his development from rabid Conservative to progressive Independent.

R. J. E.

LONDON, JUNE, 1945.

THESE NAMES MAKE NEWS.

OF the 600-odd men and women who constitute the House of Commons few are known to the general public. Outside the Cabinet the more familiar figures can be counted on two hands, while the total with anything more than local reputations rarely exceeds fifty. Fewer than one in twelve of the country's legislators are therefore known to the people at large. The rest, except for such local notice as they may achieve, might as well be ciphers for all the direct influence they exert on the broad body of national opinion.

This does not mean that the few alone are possessed of ability. Among the many are doubtless some capable minds, but in the mass they pass unnoticed, partly because they lack the urge to keep abreast of the raucous publicity scramble, and partly because they do not feel deeply on the issues that from time to time excite the populace. The failure in both respects is often due to age and sometimes to simple lack of interest. Viewed broadly, it may be said that the bulk of these unknowns fail to make the grade because they are up against the fuss and din created by the more virile and responsive few.

That, however, is not the whole story. A man may be energetic and pushful, even sensitive and wise, without hitting the parliamentary headlines. In the armoury of modern democracy the weapon of boycott has frequently prevented a man being heard beyond the immediate range of his own voice. On the other hand, a man may be as dumb as he is dull and listless and yet always hold a prominent place in the news. No one ever accused Stanley Baldwin of excessive wisdom or Neville Chamberlain of extreme sensitivity, nor was either famed for exuberant energy. But both stood big in the headlines for twenty years or more. Baldwin, indeed, had only to seal his lips to get even greater notice, much in the same way as Bank of England Governor Montague Norman earned his noisiest headlines when travelling "incognito."

It appears therefore that the eminence or obscurity of a politician is not determined by any one rule. Nor does it depend only on his personal capacity. To his native propensities must be added the element of publicity, and many other factors. The aspiring statesman may employ a publicity agent of his own—some employ more than one—or, possessing a flair himself, may hit the news without such assistance. None can be sure of striking the highlight even though assisted by a dozen publicity

aids. Of six men equally able and active five may go unnoticed. The sixth will make news because his activity pleases those who have a proprietary interest in news.

It also happens occasionally that an M.P. finds himself in the headlines for expressing opinions that do not please the news proprietors. In this case the accompanying report is seldom what the man would recognise. Exercising the bluff old English claim to do as they like with their own, the newspapers naturally play up the parts which directly or indirectly serve their own immediate purposes and tone down or delete what tells against them. If the speech holds nothing likely to redound to the man's disadvantage it may be wholly ignored—for the corollary of Press is Suppress.

What the public learns of a man—or thinks it knows of him, which amounts to the same thing—depends less on the character and activity of the individual than on the reputation built for him by the newspapers. Just before the war millions thought Britain was governed by some very able men. They had the able men's word for it, backed by the word of the able men's newspaper-owning friends plus a host of journalistic lickspittles. Which means to say that the thoughts of the multitude were manufactured almost entirely by the Press. Reluctant as the public might be to admit it, their opinions could not have derived from any other source, for not one in ten thousand could claim personal knowledge of even one Cabinet Minister and hardly one in a million knowledge of the whole Cabinet. Without the newspapers therefore the vast mass of people would have no opinion at all. The difference between opinion and no-opinion is, in this respect, simply the abridged, selected, incomplete and consequently distorted opinion provided by the Press.

Except for the so-called leading articles, these opinions are normally presented as news. What precisely constitutes news is a matter which has been debated ever since newspapers began but which most people recognise instinctively. For practical purposes news may be defined as the unusual.

A duchess having a baby is news, while the thousands of other women having babies at the same time is not news, except where the result is quads or some other abnormality ensues. It might almost be taken as axiomatic, particularly of the more sensational tabloids, that newspapers exist as mirrors of the abnormal. Assiduously searching the out-of-the-way event, they magnify and multiply the distortions of life and thus create among the credulous a quite abysmal ignorance of the real world. It is this panting insistence on the abnormal that accounts for the oft-lamented eröticism of the age, and the contents of even the staid journals, in their emphasis on the unusual, are not alto-

gether different from the bald sensationalism of the sob-soused tabloids.

Within this limited ambit of a prejudiced Press, parliamentarians make their own news. This is especially the case among the back-benchers who, crowded out by the numerous Ministers of whom notice must be taken, usually gain mention only when they figure in a scene, advocate something spectacular or otherwise diverge from the routine of the usual party hack. The articulate few are, as a rule, the rebels, the men who fit uneasily into the party fustian and resent the inactivity imposed by the party chiefs. Unlike the docile retainers, these men, having a point of view of their own and possessing also the urge to express it, are irked by the restrictions of the party machine and frequently kick against it. Their reward varies. Some are silenced by promotion. Others, declining the pickings or unattracted by the size of the plum, refuse to be gagged. Then follows a conspiracy of silence against them or a campaign of calumny. Sometimes both means are employed together and the recalcitrant Member becomes the object of a whispering campaign. There is also the threat of expulsion from the Party, which when carried out is invariably accompanied by much misrepresentation and abuse.

Yet these troublesome rebels are the salt of Parliament. Without men of their calibre there would probably never have been a Parliament, and where in times of crisis they have not emerged in sufficient number parliaments have disappeared or have been reduced to such subservience that their elimination would pass unnoticed. Taking a casual retrospect of British parliamentary history it is not the "orthodox" politicians, however exalted, who loom largest. Far bigger, emerge the Pym and Hampdens, the de Montforts, Bradlaughs and Laboucheres, and even Joseph Chamberlain, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in their earlier days. But for the courage and determination of such personalities the doors of Westminster would have been closed long ago, or opened only so far and so frequently as monarchs and their hangers-on might have deemed necessary for their own advantage.

Rebels are therefore no new phenomenon. Though they have not always appeared in the numbers merited by circumstances—if they had, the present war might have been averted—there have usually been sufficient to keep alive the parliamentary tradition. The electors should be thankful to the few who take it upon themselves to shoulder the official odium that inevitably descends on the rebellious.

Unfortunately for the public good, the political rebel is so generally misrepresented as not to be recognised for the useful

democrat he usually is. All too often he is portrayed by the newspapers as something of a fanatic, a fellow with a bee in his bonnet, a mountebank moved by a desire to show off, a man harbouring a grievance, nursing a grudge or labouring under a delusion, a paranoic or megalomaniac obsessed with an inflated idea of his own importance, or just a plain nuisance. Instead of being seriously reported he is frequently caricatured. He is made the object of irresponsible derision, the butt of envious humour or feeble wit, and vague tales are circulated concerning his motives. When light raillery fails to drive him from the scene his opponents turn to sterner methods. The vague tales become vindictive accusations. He is obstructed and ostracised, falsely accused and unjustly condemned. Unless he is able and courageous enough to hit back, he tends as time goes on to gather a sticky reputation. Muck notoriously has the habit of clinging and it often sticks most where it is least justified.

The public consequently quite often gains a wrong impression of the rebel's character and intention. And all too often there is little the fellow can do about it. He has either to throw up the sponge or, accepting the challenge, devote himself at the top pitch of exertion to rising above the bog of distrust and suspicion in which his traducers are trying to submerge him. But to fight back requires not only great courage and a grim determination but also exceptional ability, much patience and a constitution fitted to stand the strain of much hard work and worry. He must, in a word, be made of stern stuff.

Such a one is the M.P. whose career is the subject of this record. The much-maligned Member for St. Marylebone has been hitting back for quite a long time now, and with more effective result than usually falls to the individual battling on his own. He has been able to do so because in addition to possessing in high measure the personal requisites of battle he also disposes of the financial means. Others, of no less personal worth, have been forced to capitulate for the lack of cash, and there is ample evidence to declare that the Commons would list more rebels than it does were more Members blessed with an independent income. In the absence of it there are far fewer of them than the gravity of the times would warrant. They are so few indeed that only a handful readily come to mind.

In addition to C-R there is long gaunt Sir Richard Acland who won Barnstaple as a Liberal and has since founded Common Wealth. Aneurin Bevan, mercurial complacency-buster from Ebbw Vale, lashes out with aggressive fury at the least provocation, while heavy-jowled, rotund William John Brown, whose tremendous energy put the Civil Servants Clerical Association on the map of Whitehall, can be relied upon to impart a lively touch to every parliamentary occasion. To these robust voices

are sometimes joined those of Sir Stafford Cripps and D.N. Pritt, eminent lawyers. In Pritt's case attendance at the House has to dovetail with duties in the Courts, for like many other lawyers in the House he is still in legal practice. Cripps is in a different category. He relinquished a highly remunerative practice at the outbreak of war, gained big headlines over his successful mission to Moscow and his less successful trip to India, and has since become increasingly reticent under the burden, presumably, of various official appointments. His return to the Labour fold early in 1945 may also have had a blanketing influence.

Other voices rise in opposition only sporadically or on special issues, as when Emmanuel Shinwell, or William Gallacher, the lone Communist, assail the departmental blunderers or castigate the Government in war and peace. On these occasions the denunciations are sometimes supported by a few exceptional Tories, veterans like Earl Winterton or fledglings like Hugh Molson, or Independent Conservatives like D. L. Lipson, and are given additional pungency by Clem Davies or some other of the few Liberals not in the Cabinet. On broader issues Jimmy Maxton, John McGovern and Campbell Stephens sometimes give tongue. Opposed to war, they refrain from criticising an activity in which they take no share, unburdening themselves only on general questions. These three compose the remnant of the once-powerful Independent Labour Party, a body which proudly counted 33 M.P.s some years ago, most of whom however resigned on joining or aspiring to join the second Labour Government.

The much-headlined C-R, though frequently associated with one or another of these habitual critics, is in rather a different class. Official circles seem to have marked him out as the most hated man in Parliament, a label which, in the war-time Parliament, carries no small measure of unintended compliment. Certainly in the past few years he has done his share to keep the Cabinet aware of its shortcomings and in so doing has evoked much venom from official tongues. Unlike most of the others, he is a rebel from the Right, where schism is much less frequent than on the Left. Among the Left, indeed, division is the normal state of affairs, a condition explained largely by the fact that most Labour M.P.s have graduated in middle age from local leadership and find it hard to knuckle down to the cypherage required by the party caucus. Because schism is so rarely manifest on the Right, a breach when it does occur is all the more significant. In C-R's case, though it developed gradually, the split is complete and appears to be final. Deprived of the Tory whip, he has made no attempt to regain official favour and for several years now has been defined as an Independent.

In this capacity he provides the occasions which the headlines so often presume to report. From the tone and nature of these headlines he would appear to be anything but what a nice docile parliamentarian should be. He has been denounced and denigrated, smeared and calumniated as though he possessed a monopoly of all the vices. His collection of derogatory notices in the last few years must constitute a record. From which it follows that casual newspaper readers are bull-dozed into regarding him as a very bad boy. He has certainly attacked the custodians of Whitehall, embarrassed every department with innumerable questions, criticised the Tory camarilla, questioned the infallibility of the high strategists, trounced the Lords of the Treasury, slammed the slick apostles of common sacrifice, exposed the muddy reality back of the wordy patrioteers, in short has done everything a rule-ridden parliamentarian deems it unwise, untimely, indiscreet, risky, dangerous or simply impolitic to do.

WHEN REASON IS TREASON.

NOW when it comes to "smearing" an M.P. who is out of favour with the ruling clique, the mud-slingers aren't particular about the words they choose. Indeed, the more damaging the words the more are they favoured. In this category may be placed the accusation "treasonable," which was flung at the hon. and gallant Member for Marylebone some time ago.

The occasion of this accusation and the manner in which it was featured by the Press are worth noting, because they typify much that followed and much that went before. All the dailies played up the story and in every instance coupled C-R's name with the ominous word. Some of them distorted the facts in an atrocious manner, scarcely mentioning what the debate was really about. So as to avoid unnecessary explanations, it may be well to take the least distorted account. Here is how the *Daily Herald* carried the news :

" 'TREASON' M.P. IS TOLD."

" 'Treasonable ' was the word flung back at an M.P. who, in the House of Commons yesterday, criticised the smallness of the British soldier's pay compared with that of the Dominions and the United States.

" The critic was Captain Cunningham-Reid.

" Sir Edward Grigg, Under Secretary for War, rebuking him, said : ' In making these comparisons you have not done a service to the nation, the Army, or the cause for which we are fighting.'

" Captain Cunningham-Reid retorted : ' You have successfully drawn a red herring across the whole of this important question.'

" Sir Edward Grigg : ' Anything which suggests that there is anything wrong with the morale of the Army is treasonable to the cause we are serving.' "

There was no further indication of what the culprit had said in rendering such disservice and perpetrating what apparently amounted to treason against the nation. The last paragraph must have left the reader with the impression that C-R had thrown doubt on the morale of the men battling at that time in North Africa, a grave enough suggestion had it been made by a man from the front, and much more so when coming from one safely ensconced on the cushions of Westminster.

The chief damage was done in the headline, for most people scan rather than read their papers. Newspapers are in fact written so that he who runs may read, and it is the measure of the news artist's skill that he conveys what he wants to convey in the headline. If readers had the opportunity to peruse the whole story they would be better informed and less often deceived. The facts, when stated, are not always in keeping with the caption, though usually only such facts are cited as will justify the head. The *Daily Herald's* headline justified the story underneath but the story did not completely reflect what transpired in the House of Commons or what Marylebone's M.P. had said to bring down on his head the unwarranted rebuke. To get the truth it is necessary to read the Official Report known popularly as Hansard. Unfortunately few people read Hansard. At 6d. a day the price is high and, besides, it carries no sensational headlines. But anyone who cares to turn it up for February 10, 1942, will find C-R asking the Under-Secretary for War at Question Time whether he had any information to show how the pay of a British private compared with that of the same rank in the Dominion and American forces. Somewhat ponderously and not without an element of contradiction, Sir Edward Grigg replied :

" I cannot speak with authority on the rates of pay and allowances drawn by soldiers in the Dominions and American Forces, but I am circulating in the Official Report a statement containing information that I have been able to obtain in regard to the pay of private soldiers."

It is typical of Ministerial evasion (not to say ignorance), that the Under Secretary for War in a Government so closely associated with America and the Dominions should plead lack of information about so simple a matter. C-R got up to help, asked :

" Is it not a fact that the minimum pay for a private in the infantry in the British Army is 2s. 6d. while the minimum pay for a similar rank in the armies of our Dominions is 5s. ? "

The whole House knew that to be the case. Every British soldier and most British civilians knew quite well that American and Dominion pay was double that allowed in the heart of the Empire. Sir Edward was doubtless nettled. Rather than face the implication of a positive answer, he sought a way of escape. His get-out was :

" This is a very delicate and difficult question which I do not think it is at all desirable to discuss by Question and Answer in the House."

Delicate it undoubtedly was, especially for the men concerned, but difficult it certainly was not, as subsequent improvements

showed. But for the moment C-R was baulked. His only recourse was to initiate a debate, and by a rare slice of luck he managed to get in on the back of a statement made by the Premier that very day. In fact the Premier announced some slight advances, the consequence no doubt of the agitation previously maintained over many months by C-R and others.*

Though there were deep grunts of approval from a thin House as the Premier sat down, the great majority of M.P.s had in fact been quite content to have the fighting men risk everything for a minky shilling or so a day and had taken no part in the agitation for improvements. Their croaks of self-satisfaction were therefore as worthless as their general policy towards the Services. Premier Churchill no doubt possessed what it took to keep Parliament quiet on such issues. On that occasion it did not take much.

Amazed probably at the Government's continued parsimony, C-R got in soon after the P.M. and expressed his dissatisfaction. Here, somewhat summarised, is what he said in the House :—

“ Had I been satisfied with the increase in Service pay and allowances as announced to-day by the Prime Minister, I should not be raising this matter now, but I have had an opportunity of examining the White Paper to which we were referred, and also of looking at the information to which the Under-Secretary of State for War referred me in an answer to my Question earlier on. As a result I am not satisfied, and I do not think that any reasonable individual in examining these increases in pay and allowances would be satisfied.”

To make comparison easy C-R took the main rates paid to British troops and their comrades of other countries : “ From the information I have been able to obtain,” he said, “ it seems that the minimum rate of pay of a non-tradesman private in the United States Army who is now in the British Isles works out at about 5s. per day. The minimum rate for the similar kind of private in the Canadian Army is 5s. 2d., and in the Australian Army 6s. 9d. The British equivalent receives 2s. 6d. From then onwards the increases in each case are more or less proportionate. This discrepancy shows that 5s. a day would be a fair minimum for the British non-tradesman private. That is double what he is receiving now.”

From various odd corners of the House other voices now gave gruff approval, but for the most part M.P.s, under the stern eye of the Front Bench, maintained stony silence. C-R then went

* To the ordinary soldier the advance meant 3s. 6d. a week plus 1s. for each child, and 6d. a day post-war credit, an average total increase of 8s. a week, or slightly more than 1s. a day. The 6d. a day credit was to be saved for him, so that if the war went on long enough he would be a rich man. In a hundred years, for instance, the ordinary Tommy would be possessed of £900 !

on to show the disabilities which harassed the British soldier in consequence of his inadequate pay. "The British private often finds himself in a humiliating position when he meets soldiers from other countries," he said. "In the part of the world where I live the ordinary British private will not go into a 'pub' if privates from other countries are there. It is not that they do not like them, but if they go in they are not able to hold their own when it comes to a round of drinks. The 'blokes' from other countries, who have more money to spend, can go to cinemas, which the British soldier often cannot do. The British private, too, often finds it difficult enough to afford even those things that are essential to him—stamps, cleaning material, tooth paste and the like."

Every M.P. knew all this to be true. They had known it for a long time but most of them had steadily refused to do anything about it. They feared apparently that any airing of the question would "embarrass the Government"—the yesman's eternal alibi—and likewise their own chances of promotion. Safe and snug at Westminster, when they were not hiding in the country, they considered they had done their duty when they had paid a lipservice tribute to the "brave lads of the forces." C-R continued chastisingly: "The soldiers hear such propaganda slogans as 'equality of sacrifice,' that 'we are all in the front line.' What rubbish that is. How can it be claimed that the reserved war industry worker or any civilian, is making equal sacrifices with the man in the Fighting Services? This 'equality of sacrifice' is certainly not to be found in the amount of pay soldiers receive. Can it be claimed that even during the heaviest attacks of the Luftwaffe on this country the sufferings of the civilian population can be compared with the sufferings of our Service men in Crete, Flanders, Malaya and, no doubt, at this moment in Singapore, and in many other places to come? The Service man has often to carry out a duty which means risk of death. He cannot say to his commanding officer in the middle of a battle, 'Please, sir, can I go into the shelter?'"

Then he illustrated his case from a number of other angles: "I will give this example, not that I hope to bring forth any tears from the Front Bench—I think that might be difficult—but because it is typical of something that is happening all the time. It is the example of the infantry private who has a wife and family and lives in an industrial area. He gets a week's leave, and by regulation his commanding officer is not able to advance him more than 30s. for his total commitments for that week. Possibly as a result of what has been announced to-day this will be increased to something like 33s. 6d.

"When the man gets home he very likely notices the pathetic efforts of his wife to 'put up a show' for him on her meagre

allowance. That evening they possibly decide to go to the 'local' in order to meet his old friends who were in industry with him and sometimes his relations. At once they feel their inferior position. He notices the other women dressed better than his wife. His wife may be neat, but nevertheless of necessity shabby. They find their old pals only too willing to stand them drinks. Their pals know their financial position. The husband does not like that, as he is not in a position to stand their friends a drink in return. In consequence he would rather not go there for the rest of the week's holiday. During that week he notices that the neighbour's children whose father is working in industry are not only better clothed but also better fed than his."

While silent M.P.s looked down their noses or gazed anywhere but in his direction, C-R continued: "At the end of the week the soldier returns to his unit, and sometimes the week has not been very beneficial to him. It has certainly given him food for thought. He has had to leave his wife to struggle along and he has seen only too well what she has had to undertake during his absence. He is forced to the conclusion: My country thinks more of her industrial workers than of her soldiers. He realises that he has to be on duty, or available to go on duty, 24 hours in every day. He compares those conditions with the conditions of the industrial workers. When he compares the pay, there is no comparison at all.

"Do such conditions as that tend towards patriotism? Such a sense of frustration and unfairness reflects seriously upon good morale and discipline, lacking which, a soldier is not properly equipped for war. As we all know, there is a fanatical determination in Russia to subordinate all their labours and wealth to the men who are fighting and dying. 'Equality of sacrifice' prevails there; and look at the military result. Let Parliament express itself. Let us have more of the human touch and understanding and less of the 'bank balance mind.' Unless there is some real remedy, unless the fighting man, who has just been thrown a very little bun to keep him quiet, is told in a much more practical way that he is not the forgotten member of the community, very serious things can happen."

At this point, C-R protested that War Secretary Margesson—former Chief Tory Whip—was not in his place. Sir Edward Grigg, the Joint Under Secretary for War, explained that the Minister was "at present attending an important conference." Retorted C-R: "The common soldiers are looking to him to safeguard their interests as well as he did in the past the interests of a much smaller section of the community." Then he pursued the missing Minister with some biting comparisons. "The Minister of Labour (Mr. Bevin) has done very well for those for

whom he is responsible," he said. "If he had not obtained reasonable conditions for his workers, I feel confident there would have been a mighty row in Cabinet circles, and if he had not obtained satisfaction I have no doubt he would have resigned, and he would have told the country why he resigned. The Secretary of State for War could do as much for his soldiers. If he is unable to do so, I consider that he should resign. Other countries supposed to be poorer than we, are able to find a sufficiency of money in order that their soldiers shall have decent pay. If the present War Secretary and his Under Secretary and his Financial Secretary are the right men for the job, they will get their thinking caps on and get their influence to work. When you consider their combined influence, they could soon find means of obtaining for their soldiers a fairer deal, if not to the extent enjoyed by our industrial workers, at any rate approximating to the financial conditions prevalent among soldiers from overseas."

That, according to the Official Report was the burden of what the ex-airman M.P. said to invoke the abusive reply of the Under Secretary. Whilst Grigg was speaking C-R interposed with two further pertinent questions. Was Sir Edward himself satisfied with the minimum amount a British private received? To this Sir Edward replied: "I said perfectly clearly that I would not discuss the general question which will be raised in Parliament next week." So C-R tried another: "Sir Edward mentioned that in raising this matter to-day I had rendered a disservice. Does he mean that I have rendered a disservice to the private in the Army or to the Government?"

That was a nasty one, and while Sir Edward floundered about Sydney Silverman jumped up and said: "Surely it is a very strange doctrine that if there are grievances in the Armed Forces, or people think there are such grievances, they are rendering a disservice to the Armed Forces, the country and the cause by raising those grievances in the House. To say that a Member who makes a comparison which hundreds of thousands of people outside are making, is rendering a disservice, is surely itself to render a disservice to every man engaged in the Army."

Sir Edward: "I retain my opinion, and of course the hon. member is entitled to retain his."

Well, that is how C-R came to be accused of doing a disservice to the Army and the Nation and what created all the newspaper noise about "treason." But the public were only given the noise. The records have to be unearthed to discover what really happened. That is the way of the Press. As a result numbers of uninformed people would still repeat to-day, "But he committed treason, didn't he?" Such are the fruits of the subtle technique of "smearing" a recalcitrant M.P.

PRELUDE TO POLITICS.

BEFORE tracing the further development of this political pilgrimage it might be as well to pause a moment and take a look at the origins of "Westminster's bad boy." Much of the story can be pieced together from the snob journals which in the course of the past two decades have considered C-R and his activities as eminently newsworthy.

Born in Merton, Norfolk, in 1896, C-R's godparents were Lady Clementine Mitford and Lord Baden Powell. His father the Reverend Arthur Reid, onetime private chaplain to Lord Walsingham, was a descendant of the Earls of Glencairn, while his paternal grandfather, a power in India in the days of the old East India Company, was for a time Governor of Bombay, where the Reid Medal, annual prize at Bombay University, perpetuates his memory. An early ancestor, James Cunningham, 14th Earl of Glencairn, was the patron whom Robert Burns lamented in his famous poem.*

C-R's grandmother on his father's side was a Boileau of the ancient house of Castlenau. One of the family, Etienne Boileau, was appointed by Louis IX Grand Provost of Paris, then the most eminent office of State. Though the certificates of the official genealogists are not always to be taken at face value—they always commanded a good price and were a rich source of monkish wealth in the feudal era—the Reid and Cunningham records have a considerable claim to historical authenticity. In any case, they bear closer relation to the facts than most of those

* *Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.* Containing some of the best of the celebrated poet, these lines pay eloquent tribute to his benefactor. The eighth and last verses read :

In Poverty's low barren vale,
Thick mists obscure involv'd me round ;
Though oft I turned the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found :
Thou found'st me, like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air,
The friendless Bard and rustic song
Became alike thy fostering care.
The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen ;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been ;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sac sweetly on her knee ;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me !

of the higher English peerage in deference to whose fabricated pedigrees history as written has so often been distorted.

Soldiers and statesmen are to be found on both sides of the Reid line over many generations. Fragments of the record are inscribed on many a church in France. These forbears were close aides of the French kings and some married into the royal family.

On the maternal side C-R's ancestors were the Stratfords, the Earls of Aldborough, who gave their name to the home of Shakespeare and many other towns of the same name. C-R continues this connection as a Governor of the Stratford Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. One of his great-uncles was Sir William Flower, who was President of the Natural History Department of the British Museum and renowned for much disinterested philanthropy. Others of the line have built or restored and given to the nation many public buildings. This arm of the family stemmed from that of the 9th Viscount Ashbrook.

Tracing its descent through forty generations from the time of Alfred the Great, the family has produced an Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishops of Winchester, London, Durham, Chichester and Chester, a Lord Regent and a Treasurer, members of the justiciary of England, several Keepers of the Great Seal and many Lord Chancellors. An illustrious lineage, surely, judged by the established standards.

Many of those on his mother's side were Quakers, and it is of these that C-R is said to be most proud, a thought that has prompted some of his friends to declare there would be a commotion in heaven if the departed Quakers knew of it. Though he emulated his French progenitors in making a matrimonial connection with the Court, C-R has more in common with those who had the courage to revolt against the established order of things. His maternal great-grandfather, sojourning long in America, raised the ire of the slaveowners, against whom by word and deed he waged personal and political warfare. So fiercely did he espouse the cause of the slaves, that one night an armed gang descended on his house to settle accounts. Tipped by a grateful negro, however, the great-grandfather escaped just in time, but his cousin was killed by the outraged slaveowners.

It was partly on the strength of this anti-slavery episode that when C-R's mother was young, President Grant became a guest of her family at The Hill, Stratford-on-Avon, and it was here that he gave vent to the crack that has found its way into all the popular American histories. Asked by the hostess, who had a Victorian prejudice for a clean atmosphere, why he smoked so much, the President replied: "Aw, Lady, I only smoke twice a day—from breakfast to lunch and from lunch to bedtime."

Another reason for the President's choice of host was the household's fame as a rendezvous of the talent of the day, leading poets, painters, musicians, scientists, explorers, ambassadors and politicians, English, Oriental and Continental, often finding hospitality there. C-R's uncle, Lord Erskine, met his bride whilst staying at The Hill.

Young Alec, schooled in France, Switzerland and Italy, entered Clare College, Cambridge, at 18 and left at 18 for the Royal Engineers, and subsequently transferred to the R.F.C.

Like so many youngsters of his day he was imbued in 1914 with the idea of making the world safe for democracy, little knowing how a crowd of old and ageing men safely dug in at Westminster and the City were exploiting the idealism of youth in furtherance of their own cynical avarice. He found in the Royal Flying Corps, as the R.A.F. was then called, full scope for his youthful pugnacity. After the excitements of combat in the air and a serious injury he took on the unenviable job of aerial fighting instructor. A skilled and decorated pilot, he fell under the notice of the high-ups, joined General Sir John Salmond's headquarters in France as Staff-Captain, and for the last part of the war spent much time flying important personal cargoes back and forth between home and front, throwing in a spot of staff-work in between.

Sir John being Supreme Commander of the Air Force in the Field, to him came all the visiting notables. Almost invariably he passed them over to Staff-Captain C-R who thus won many friends among the great. Among his passengers was the Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor) who had quite a passion for flying. One day, swooping over Cologne, the Prince suggested "doing some good stunts." Thinking the Prince had already had some stunting experience, C-R, who had specialised in aerial acrobatics, began a hair-raising performance. Climbing to 7,000 feet he did three upward rolls, a gyration that leaves one's timmy near one's mouth as the nose of the machine comes down at the end of each roll. Then he spiralled for a few thousand feet, did a number of half rolls, taking care to linger while the plane was upside down, and finished the contortions with a vertical side slip over the Cathedral spire. He was about to climb for another version when a feeble touch on the shoulder brought his head round to see the Prince holding one hand to mouth and the other pointing downwards, but still bravely attempting his famous smile. C-R landed in a hurry, and it was only when they were safe aground and a tactful interval had elapsed that the Prince revealed he had never stunted before. Which probably explains why he had little appetite for lunch that day. Nevertheless, Edward remained a keen flyer and in after years would have piloted his own machine but for the ban imposed by authority.

Prince Albert, now King George VI, was, like C-R, an S.O.9 on the Air Staff. Representing the Royal House in the R.A.F., he had the commendable desire to earn his wings, and C-R was to teach him. Two Avros were ordered from home, but the plans were upset by the sudden arrival of the Armistice.

Early in his flying life C-R became a member of the famous fighting Squadron No. 85 commanded by Major Bishop, V.C., outstanding Ace of the last war, and now an Air-Marshal. A book entitled "Planes and Personalities," which C-R wrote at the end of the war, mirrors himself at the carefree age of 23 or thereabouts. Though devoted mainly to the men and machines that came within his ken during World War I, it contains sufficient personal comment to give a good idea of his own mental and moral makeup at that period. Incidentally, it also provides one of the most authentic pictures of life in the R.A.F. during that initial stage of the war in the 'air.

In a preface to the book, Billy Bishop, V.C., remarks of C-R : "His own exploits, which won for him in a marvellously short time the D.F.C., I find he has modestly slurred over, but those of us who were with him in France know and appreciate the wonderful work he did there. The whole story in its humorous simplicity and modesty is typical of the man himself."

A derisive hoot will break forth in certain quarters at the idea of C-R being simple ! But on going through the book the reader is certainly struck by the homeliness of its appeal. Richly humorous it unquestionably is and, as might be expected in an account of rash deeds and rollicking days, not without an element of the risqué and the ribald. Those lads liked nothing better in off-battle flights than to land with some imaginary engine trouble on a spacious private lawn and have the admiring daughters press them to tea. When the engine or fog or whatnot offered excuse enough, they stayed to breakfast as well.

But the game was not all girls and skittles. Flying over enemy lines in those early contraptions of struts and string required endurance as well as skill and courage. The 1914 fighter plane would not be recognisable as an aeroplane in comparison with a modern Spitfire. The pilot sat between a confusion of wires and struts protected from the weather and all else by a scrap of canvas—no safety devices, no armour plating. Measured against a modern Typhoon the speed of those machines was a crawl, though the controls were trickier. With such primitive and flimsy coracles it was no wonder that though the force was small the losses were high.

Yet C-R found it "a glorious feeling to be aloft surrounded by a splendid and expensive contrivance and to know it was

absolutely up to you to make it work wonders both in attack and defence," and derived consolation from the thought that "in war-flying there are few disabled cases, it is generally either death or nothing." He had himself suffered disablement in the Royal Engineers before transferring to the R.F.C., and he made the transfer just after his only brother had been killed in combat over the German lines. This elder brother, Lieut. Duncan Cunningham-Reid, along with Lieut. Gordon Smith, who died with him, won high tribute from the Germans. Having run into a greatly superior enemy force they could have landed, but kept up the fight for nearly half an hour, thus enabling the machine they were escorting to get safely home and, according to the War Office citation, "saving two lives and allowing valuable information to be gained." The Germans buried them with full military honours, set up a tombstone ingeniously constructed of the tail of the machine and subsequently dropped on the British lines some appreciative cuttings from local papers together with some personal belongings, a photograph of the grave and a guide to its location. When the shooting had ended C-R paid a visit to the district and heard from local eyewitnesses the story of his brother's gallantry.

Far from boasting of his own exploits, C-R writes ironically of "we brave airmen," makes many references to drooping morale, including his own, while showing sympathetic regard for the foot-slogger who "has night and day to face the chance of a stray bullet and all the horrors of trench warfare." Of himself he recounts how once emerging from cloud over what he momentarily mistook for German-held Ostend, he "had the wind up properly," especially as a couple of distant planes seemed to be on the look out for just such a lone bird as he happened to be. Fortunately, the place turned out to be Allied-occupied Calais, and he breathed more freely, "though feeling rather ashamed of myself."

As a member of Billy Bishop's famous straffing circus, C-R could have packed the book with plenty of personal achievements, but nowhere does he talk much about his own combats. His nearest approach concerns "the dreadful sight of a large Hun two-seater falling past me on fire. So close did it pass that I could feel the heat of the flames, which could also be seen licking the agonised face of the pilot." His comment is revealing: "It is one thing to shoot a running rabbit, but quite another to wring its neck, and this sight so distressed and unnerved me that I gave flying a miss for two days."

Not a mention in C-R's book of how he brought down at least a dozen Germans. That has to be gathered from accounts given by others. Nor does he mention his D.F.C. He makes

some caustic comment on the reasons why during that war the R.A.F. became somewhat denigrated as a "mixed crowd." Said he : " In war-flying guts are more necessary than breeding, and a public school education did not necessarily help a man much in shooting down a Hun." He is caustic too at the blind stupidity of Whitehall bumbledom and flings a nasty shaft at the routineers who declined to provide pilots with parachutes lest they seized the opportunity to funk a fight ! These protests, like the gay provocativeness of the book, convey a hint of the man's subsequent career. They constitute a trailer of his later floutings of authority which have made him the *bête noir* of Ministers and their satellites, in and out of Parliament.

So much for the antecedents and the war record of this Parliamentary rebel.

A knowledge of them is necessary to keep later events in proper perspective. The day was to come when his opponents in Parliament, pursuing their campaign of derogation, even stooped to an accusation of cowardice against him.

A DARLING OF THE TORIES.

AS one of the demobbed heroes, in 1919 C-R stood on the threshold of success in any direction he cared to go. Favoured by the influential connections gained whilst at R.F.C. Headquarters, he might have acquired a good job in any one of a dozen prosperous concerns and in fact did so.

C-R got a head start on many of his Service contemporaries by getting demobilised soon after the Armistice, when he entered the well-known firm of merchant bankers, E. D. Sassoon Ltd. (not to be confused with David Sassoon Ltd., same family, but rivals), whose titular head was Sir Philip Sassoon, Bt., M.P. for Hythe, and a great friend of C-R's war-time boss Sir John Salmond. C-R had often flown Sassoon back and forth to advance R.F.C. Headquarters.

Ensnconced in E. D. Sassoon's citadel C-R started at the bottom. He has since said that this apprenticeship with that establishment gave him a more useful education than all his school and college days put together. Anyhow, it seems subsequently to have stood him in good stead as far as business was concerned. Having worked his way up in Sassoon's, and gathered a good deal about money-making, he was rumoured to be going out to one of the firm's branches in China. But apparently he had other plans. After consulting his mother—to whom he appears to have been very much attached—he launched out in a small way in business on his own, extended his interests in several directions including insurance, and became a member of Lloyd's. Within a few years he had amassed a considerable fortune which was said to bring him in between £2,500 and £3,000 a year. This information emerged during litigation many years later. Had he stuck to business he would probably have been to-day a healthier, wealthier and happier man. Business success, if it did not come easily—it involved him in much hard work—had at any rate come swiftly and, with his now still wider connections, he was about to expand along a line that might have made him a considerable influence in the City when he suddenly decided to give money-making a miss and accepted an invitation to carry the Tory standard in Warrington. He was then 26 and so far had sailed through life with the angels on his side, his every venture having blossomed forth into personal and material advantage.

During the latter part of this period he had been perceptibly edging towards public life. Living with his mother in St.

Marylebone he tasted the spice of politics in an unsuccessful municipal election. It must be assumed that he liked politics, for only on that assumption, and perhaps in consequence of the eager presumption of youth, is it possible to explain why a man should desert a sound and certain competence for the wild uncertainties of a career dependent on the fickle deviations of the crowd. Chairman of Marylebone's Young Tories, he had drunk deep of the pernicious brew then being piped from a dozen agencies of the Conservative Party. The Tories had need of such as he, for the millions, fed on the promised heaven that was to follow the defeat of the Hun, were getting somewhat restive at the delayed delivery. For the Tories the future had come, but having neither the means nor the desire to provide the promised substance, they did not hesitate to use the recent heroes to supply a further potion of the patriotic soporific. Many were the young Tories who got into Parliament in 1922. Some of them have remained there long enough to do tremendous damage under the ægis of the 1922 Committee into which they constituted themselves soon after the election. It must be said for the Tory caucus that in pushing the earnest and often be-medalled young men they managed the election well.

C-R was one of these Tory elect, and Fate, in the garb of the innocent Warringtonians, still casting its magic around, he defeated his Socialist opponent by a majority of nearly two thousand, which was not a bad performance in a constituency composed almost entirely of factories and working-class dwellings. He had hardly arrived at Westminster when Sir John Baird, Minister of Works, selected him as Parliamentary Private Secretary, a very minor office, though less cheap than it has become under the "National" Government, particularly the War Administration. Since 1939 P.P.S.s have been ten a penny, even the most junior Minister rarely being seen about without one. Some P.P.S.s occasionally have an assistant, thus raising slightly their own elevation and enhancing the prestige of the whole departmental oligarchy. Like the self-made men who start life as newsvendors, so most Ministers start as P.P.S.s.

The function of the efficient P.P.S. being to keep the spotlight on his chief, C-R took little of it himself during this period. As a beginner he probably found it sufficient to make himself acquainted with the workings of the House and the mysteries of his Department. It must be admitted he made his maiden speech in unique and frightening circumstances. It is generally only seasoned Ministers who introduce Bills that are to be accorded a full debate in the House. C-R sponsored the Warrington Water Bill, which sought powers to flood a Welsh valley to provide an adequate water supply for south Lancashire. Wizard Lloyd George came down to the House especially to oppose "this

vandalism to my beautiful and beloved Wales " but on the final Division C-R won the day.

According to the *Bournemouth Echo*, though he had entered the House with the reputation of being one of the war's intrepid aces, " when he was making his maiden speech his hands trembled and he confessed that he had never felt so nervous in his life."

A year later a discontented electorate cut short the Government's tenure, and in a three-cornered contest C-R suffered defeat at the hands of the Labour Party's Charlie Dukes, vigorous hard-hitting champion of the North-Eastern transport workers. But it was a near thing, and had it not been for the Liberal intervention, which nullified over 4,000 votes, C-R's expectations of an increased majority might have materialised. As it was, Dukes carried to Westminster a balance of 670 to share the country's disappointment in Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour Government.

In 1923, while Ramsay and his ill-assorted team, making the most of their social opportunities, stone-walled against the common expectation, C-R, far from pleased at Government or Opposition complacency, hurled a number of disconcerting balls against the Tory wicket. He descended on various local organisations, trounced the Tory elders and called on the younger folk to bestir themselves and awaken the " sleeping beauties." Typical of his orations was a blistering speech to the Warrington Conservatives, in which he confessed that were he entering politics in some constituencies he would not be encouraged to join the Conservative Association because he would find it run " by a collection of elderly and superior people who, though worthy, were behind the times and would not be likely to give a young man much encouragement." He was tired of being told that the root of their Party troubles was apathy, for " if every elderly Conservative, who was young once, were instilled with the proper spirit there would be no apathy." It was due to the old boys' dependence on platitude that the younger generation had been left without an adequate sense of their political responsibilities. He therefore counselled the younger elements to " descend on such weary organisations like a lot of locusts, remind the stick-in-the-muds that we are not living in 1895 and vote them out." The *Westminster Gazette* labelled that speech " a scathing attack on the Conservative leaders." Other journals were more modest. But the oldsters from many local associations protested to headquarters the need to " discipline this young man," whom they regarded as something of a menace to their established habits.

Not content with castigating the elders, C-R set up a new organisation designed to " combat extremism and jerk the som-

nolent into action." Called the League of Youth and Liberty, the initials flamed from the posters as LOYAL, a peculiarly appealing combination for the true blue partisans who have ever regarded Toryism as the sole repository of national virtue. Supported by Esmond Harmsworth, then the M.P. for Thanet, now the second Lord Rothermere, supreme pontiff of the *Daily Mail*, and by Lord Apsley of the *Morning Post*, C-R carried the League's cogent but ill-conceived message all over the country. "Young Loyalists arise and down the Reds" was the substance of its programme, a demand, had he but known it, quite superfluous in the prevailing circumstances. With Jimmy Clynes at the Home Office in charge of an extended C.I.D. the Labour Government was devoting full attention to chivvying the Reds, while the Labour ladies, the wives and daughters and other relatives of the Labour Ministers, were all excitedly consolidating the domination of the diehards by learning to ape their betters, striving to bring their manners apace with their fortunes, taking lessons in deportment at the Mayfair mansions, fitting themselves and their children to careen appropriately in the presence of the great. There was really no reason to fear any divergence from Tory precepts while the paramount ambition of the leading Labourites was to have their wives and daughters move in "the best circles."

Persevering with his drive against the party greybeards C-R perfected his organisation—at considerable personal expense it was said—with the main objective of attracting young men and women to Conservatism. At this stage the Central Office and some of the more seasoned Conservatives, who had watched the progress of LOYAL with increasing perturbation, began to take a hand. Already well served by the Primrose League, the Junior Imperial League and a host of other seemingly independent bodies whose true-blue and buxom ladies were intent on enlightening the proletariat with a show of social grace, the Tory topnotchers thought the new League not only a danger to their own control but an evidence of undue presumption on the part of its sponsors. Finally C-R and his associates were induced to consider a compromise. At a round table chat with Central Office they were persuaded to link their LOYAL with the Junior Imperial League, and C-R and Harmsworth were elevated to the JIL Advisory Council with a promise of considerable say in the running of that organisation. This astute move on the part of the Tory high-ups was a good example of killing the cacklers by enticing them into the pen, a process not unknown in other organisations. After that no more was heard of LOYAL or its objectives, for the high-ups saw to it that the JIL Council was never convened, at least not until the LOYAL representatives' tenure of office had lapsed!

Nor had C-R much time to devote to its resurrection. Thanks to the ineptitude of MacDonald and his advisors the country was again in the throes of a general election. C-R lost no time in resuming the rostrum at Warrington. Within a few hours of the Labour Government's collapse the town was ablaze with Conservative slogans. "Rally Round Reid" blared the bills on every available hoarding, most of them booked up while the Labourites were recovering from the shock of the MacDonald débacle.

Said a chronicler of the *Sunday Graphic*, "We set out to canvass the workers of a large factory in the neighbourhood during the luncheon hour. Polling was to take place the next day. Unfortunately the Socialist had forestalled us and was already standing on a soap-box haranguing the crowd.

" 'This won't do!' said Reid, 'I've got an idea.'

"He marched up to the soap-box and suggested they should each speak for ten minutes.

"The Socialist jumped at the idea, but after two minutes he objected to what Reid was saying. With a few supporters he pushed him from the platform.

"At this Reid took off his coat and bellowed dramatically :

" 'If he won't fight fair on the platform I'll fight him in the ring!'

"The Socialist, a burly fellow, refused to move. Promptly the crowd pulled off their red rosettes and turned to listen to Reid."

The campaign was hot and heavy. Charles Dukes, fighting with all the vigour of which he was capable, suffered, like a hundred other Labour M.P.s, the disadvantage that flowed from the confusion and pomposity ruling at Ecclestone Square (at that time the Labour Party's national headquarters).

Everything considered, Dukes did remarkably well, lifting the Labour vote to 15,251, the highest ever recorded in the division. But C-R did better. He pulled the Conservative vote up to 16,788 and started his second sojourn at Westminster with a majority of 1,537.

CHAMPION OF THE SERVICES.

ALMOST as soon as he had taken his seat, C-R resumed his interest in Service affairs. When the Air Estimates came up in March, 1925, he attacked Air Secretary Samuel Hoare, demanding better provision for the safety of the men in the R.A.F. and illustrating his case with some evidence from his own experience. "When I was a miserable pilot," he said, "I used to think that it would be a very good thing if on occasions those in high authority could hear what the pilot had to say about the decisions of the mighty."

During the war, he went on, he often heard remarks, and frequently remarked himself, that if only old So-and-So—mentioning one of the powers that were—could himself actually do some flying and go through the same experience as the pilots, a far more satisfactory state of affairs would soon be established. Instancing the dangers to which the pilots were unnecessarily exposed, he said: "Hon. Members who have any knowledge of practical flying will agree that what the average airman dreaded more than anything else on active service was fire. The idea of his machine becoming alight and him diving to earth in flames was always subconsciously at the back of his mind.

"I contend—and I do not think I am alone in this contention—that this fear, this danger, could have been overcome if only we had been supplied with parachutes. We used to see the German airmen leave their burning machines and jump to ground in comparative safety, because they were supplied with parachutes; and we used to see our own friends go to earth in flames, and were powerless to do anything to prevent them meeting a dreadful death. We were resentful, not because we minded an individual German life being saved, but because our own friends did not have the same opportunity of saving their lives."

"On that particular question," he continued, "I myself, with one or two others, made somewhat violent representations, but the only result was that we nearly got into very serious trouble. We were always met with the same answers. We were told that if a machine was fitted with a parachute, it would detract from the speed of that machine. We were even told that there was not sufficient silk in the country to provide for all the parachutes which would be required. And, last, but not least, we constantly got the answer, which I believe originated in this House, that if pilots were supplied with parachutes they would be jumping out

of their machines on the slightest provocation. Is it likely, I ask, that any reasonable man, two or three miles up, would, on the slightest provocation, jump out of his machine and trust himself to a flimsy bit of material? I do not think it is."

At this stage, pausing for answer, he cast a critical glance over the crowd of bald and bloated "representatives of the people," dozens of whom had waxed enormously fat on the war and were still doing well on its aftermath. In the same challenging strain he continued: "If we had been supplied with parachutes, I maintain it would have increased the morale of the pilots by at least 50 per cent., and we would have fought fifty times better, and the benefits, especially the fighting results, to the Force as a whole would have been greatly increased.

"Quality was always decisive in air combat, whether in individual dog-fights or large scale assault. But how can we get quality," he asked, "if we do not keep abreast of the times? I am frankly perturbed when I see the present condition of our Air Estimates. I find that on experimental work we are going to expend out of the total only a matter of six per cent. The best means of providing for a reserve of pilots and of continuing practical flying experience is undoubtedly through the encouragement and the resultant expansion of civil aviation; but I again look at the estimates, and I find that, out of the total amount, only two per cent. has been allotted to civil aviation." Needless to say the Government had no effective answer. It took a series of Governments more than ten years even to begin facing up to the problems then raised.

This was not the only issue on which C-R dared to criticise the Government of which, as Parliamentary Private Secretary—this time to Transport Minister Colonel Wilfred Ashley—he was in fact a part. By numerous questions and in many debates he challenged the deeds and misdeeds of the Administration, thus early demonstrating a determination to maintain his rights as a Private Member. Much to the delight of his constituents, at least the Conservative element, he was as active outside as inside the Commons. Also, in his clashes with the party oldsters, he showed an eager readiness to practice what he preached. He urged the necessity of taking to the week-end platform, as was the habit among various Socialist organisations, and though his adjurations did not have much effect in high quarters, he himself continued pushing the Tory specifics up and down the country. As keen on maintaining peace as preparing, if necessary, for war, he figured often on the platform of the League of Nations Union. Harbours no illusions about the League and its shaky foundations, he told an audience in 1925 that "if Britain becomes lukewarm in support of the League, that League will cease to

exist." Discussing the Locarno Conference—then the universal topic—in the same speech, he declared that a "multilateral reduction of armaments can only be secured by adherence to the principles of arbitration laid down in the League covenant"—prophetic utterances, as these last few tragic years have testified.

His manner in the Commons was at this time marked by a disarming modesty. Too polite in those days to employ a bludgeon, and probably having no desire to fall out with the party chiefs, he frequently resorted to a subtle and self-deprecating humour, leaving the Ministers to infer that something would really have to be done to meet the mental limitations of Members, most of whom were about as dumb as he pretended to be. A good but by no means exceptional example of this method may be cited from a speech on the derating of machinery proposed under the Rating and Valuation Bill at the end of 1925. It is packed with sly humour. Speaking with apparently unfeigned innocence he said :

"I regret that this Clause has not been made the subject of a Government Bill in itself. As it is, it has been added to the Rating and Valuation Bill, which I think is unfortunate. I must admit, that so far as the Rating and Valuation Bill is concerned, I, personally, do not understand it; it is too complicated. I have sat here the last two days and listened to all the arguments for and against. I have received more literature on this particular Bill than I have ever received on any Bill before, and the more I hear about it, the more literature I receive on the subject, the more bewildered I become, and I expect that this is the experience of other hon. Members. I do trust that, at any rate, the promoters of this Bill understand it, because if they do not, nobody else can. But even if the blessings of the whole Bill are assured, or be they doubtful, I shall vote for it, if only for Clause 24, which I consider to be essential. This Clause differs from all other clauses in one respect in particular, and that is that it is easy to comprehend, except for the word 'hereditament,' a word I have constantly to look up. But I understand it is not policy for any Government Department when introducing a Bill of their own to make it simple, because if it were simple, it would mean that the simple-minded Member such as myself, would easily understand it, and that would very often greatly retard the progress of a Bill."

Not every P.P.S. would have dared or been allowed to reflect on his superiors with such easy levity, and fewer still could have got away with it. There is a nasty sting in the tail of that passage, one which has in more recent times found supplementation from no less an authority than Winston Churchill who, with similar impishness, picked holes in the alleged English of the Civil

Service and the parliamentary lawyers. But the urbane young Captain had a knack of enforcing his points with gentle derision without causing offence. On the contrary, without currying favour he always managed to attract it. Stanley Baldwin at that time thought him a tremendous asset to the Party, and many of the bigwigs, despite the embarrassment they often endured at C-R's too eager regard for the sanctity of election promises, warmly predicted for him a big future in the Commons. Service-folk in the know were delighted at his efforts on their behalf, but the number in the know was extremely limited because the national newspapers preferred to play up the woolly effusions on "peace in our time" proceeding from Stanley Baldwin (who, however, when the Disarmament Conference came along, declined to make any practical contribution).

Nevertheless C-R had ample publicity in Lancashire local papers where his exertions on behalf of individual constituents were rapidly earning him high commendation among supporters and opponents alike. The files of these journals abound with his praises, for he seems to have tackled the small matters that came his way with the same diligence as he applied to the larger ones. One of the things that went far to consolidate his stock both among constituents and party associates was his energetic though unsuccessful attempt to get small tradesmen and independent artisans included in the Widows, Orphans and Old Age Pensions scheme. Time and again he pressed the proposal on the Ministry of Health but derived little satisfaction except at a later date, when his solicitations bore some modest result in an independent scheme under which the small men were allowed to insure at higher rates of contribution.

Despite his frequent criticisms, however, and his occasional glimmers of light, the Member for Warrington remained an ardent Conservative. Such was his political immaturity that he even believed parties put up programmes to carry them out. Moved by simplicity or audacity, he assured his constituents that when the next election came along his Party would secure a crushing majority because "we have done what no party has ever done, or perhaps tried to do—that is, we have fulfilled all our election pledges." Then, contradictorily, he urged the need of an Imperial programme to find jobs for the increasing numbers thrown on the dole. For this, however, he blamed "the Socialists and the general strike, which has resulted in bad trade, stagnation of wages and the arrest of social progress." This, he said appropriately, "a child could see."

Throughout this period C-R's dominating interest remained the Services, more especially the Air Force, and here he was as articulate on every aspect of policy as on the personal welfare

of the men. Reading through the Official Reports is to find him perennially on his feet blasting away at official complacency. Had his numerous warnings been appreciated many of Britain's subsequent disasters might well have been avoided. In 1926 he was already emphasising the potency of air power at sea and in a speech which, in February of that year, won warm commendation from Air Commodore F. V. Holt, then in charge of Air Defence, virtually foretold the tragic fate of the Repulse and Prince of Wales,* declaring such tragedies inevitable, "because the Government will not or can not understand that a few planes can knock out the best of battleships." Condemning the meagreness of the Air Estimates—£16,000,000 out of £150,000,000 scheduled that year for the fighting services—he argued that if no larger total sum could be managed then the R.A.F. should be granted a slice from the other Services.

In 1929, calling attention to the connection between civil and military aviation, he revealed that France and Germany possessed 250 commercial machines each while Britain had only 21. Abandoning his gentle rapier, on this occasion he bombed the War Office and Admiralty in no uncertain manner. "The root of the trouble," he said, "is that the Ministers of the two senior Services are once again comfortably dug in and conveniently refuse to learn anything from the war or give way one inch to modern conditions." While the two Service Chiefs sat squirming, C-R continued: "They have completely forgotten how the population of the metropolis spent night after night in cellars and tubes in an agitated attempt to avoid hostile bombs. By spending more on the R.A.F. and less, if necessary, on the Army and Navy both the national Exchequer and the national security would benefit."

Yet it was not until the Ministry of Aircraft Production was set up in 1940 and the population was again cramming the cellars and tubes (the official bigwigs having provided for themselves more safe and comfortable places) that the Government by its actions acknowledged the wisdom of these remarks—and by that time the war was all but lost, the complete catastrophe only being averted by the Axis folly which brought the Soviet Union and the United States to the rescue.

* Both sunk by Japanese planes off Malaya, December 10th, 1941.

HIGH SOCIETY FAIRY STORY.

BACK in those spacious days of 1927 no hint of the future tragedy darkened the horizon of Britain's political and social elite. Having, as they imagined, shattered the menace of German imperialism and, in the interval, battered into impotence the hope engendered by the war among the common folk at home, they contemplated a prolonged enjoyment of the spoils. With shrewd big business tycoons at the top, a crowd of grasping trade union pundits at the bottom and a host of half-baked politicians of all colours constantly flustered by the fear of Bolshevism in between, the mighty minority had some reason to be satisfied with themselves. Aided by all the forces of the State and the asinine stupidity of the official trade union brigade, they had recently rid themselves of the revolutionary challenge incipient in the idea of a general strike and were now tasting the fruits of "tranquillity," indulging in what the *Daily Telegraph* called "the finest society season since the war."

That this was accompanied by a spate of repressive legislation unparalleled in the century was of small importance compared with the immediate delights of the season and the future prospects it seemed to afford. Under the pressure of the Federation of British Industries, Sir John Simon, with a savagery equalled only by his suavity, was foisting on the country a vindictive Act to push the trade unions back to the status of 1913, Joynson-Hicks was crudely burgling the offices of the Russian Trade Delegation, and a fierce Sedition Act was on the way. Exercising what Sir Allen Smith termed "the right to manage their own business," the engineering employers were cutting wages and closing ship-yards and the mineowners were augmenting their profits out of the miners' additional daily hour of sweat. Simultaneously, the landowners were smacking their lips at prospective additions of rent on the basis of subsidies and protection, while the bankers, under the tutelage of Montague Norman and the Chancellorship of Winston Churchill, were sitting pretty on a nation delivered up to the Gold Standard.

In this delightful atmosphere the whirligig of wealth and fashion occupied most of the headlines, big society events being varied occasionally by reports of a daring burglary, the gory details of some gruesome murder, the latest achievement in pole squatting or the newest record for standing still. By way of further variation there were some derisive stories of a few fools in Moscow starting something called a five year plan, an occasional splutter concerning a few million Orientals (who had so far

forgotten their subservience to the white-races as to set up a Commune to secure China for the Chinese), the annual version of the Loch Ness monster, and some scattered references to the perversity of the unemployed who seemed unable to appreciate the national danger of the State's allowing their children more than a shilling a week.

At this particular period—early 1927—the Member for Warrington was exercising his ski-ing talent on the slopes of the Alps, and the social set had hardly returned to London for the beginning of the season when the entire Press rose to the long whispered news of his engagement to attractive red-haired Miss Mary Ashley, daughter of Transport Minister Colonel Ashley. It was a story to stir the tongues of Mayfair and thrill the heart of every servant girl or factory lass from Warrington to Westminster. The newspapers splashed it big, referred to it for weeks, regurgitated its antecedents and anticipated its climax right up to the great day of the wedding, and kept the feminine multitude enthralled in the couple's doings for months afterwards.

In pursuing the story the newsmen were exhibiting a sound sense of psychology, for the match possessed all the elements of a maiden's dream of romance, a young man's ideal, and, no less important, embraced the whole ambit of ideas and institutions which it is the business of newspapers to foster. Commenting on the engagement, the *Daily Express* gossipman said: "Captain 'Bobby' Cunningham-Reid is a good looking young man with a belief in his star. Miss Ashley is a sister of Lady Louis Mountbatten and besides being most attractive to look at and talk to is a great heiress. With her to help him Captain Cunningham-Reid should have a great career, for he is intelligent and ambitious, a strong combination." Said the *Belfast News-Letter*, "If it be true that a good son is sure to be a good husband Miss Ashley will be a happy girl." Here it might be observed that rarely has a man been so devoted to his mother as C-R was to his, and it is declared on all sides that no mother could have had a better or more thoughtful son. To quote C-R: "You can have more than one good wife in this world, but only one good mother." She died in 1941.

Said *The Queen*: "The Captain and his fiancée are a strikingly handsome couple." The *Star* captioned: "M.P. Engaged to Heiress," and the *Standard* shouted: "A Political Romance." The *Sketch* reported from St. Moritz: "The party given at Suvretta House by Miss Mary Ashley and Captain 'Bobby' Cunningham-Reid was the gayest event of the winter," and added a list of the more eminent guests, among them Lord and Lady Plunket, Lady Cranborne, the Earl and Countess of Haddington, Colonel Crookshank, the Hon. Bruce Ogilvy, Lady

Alice Scott, Lady Rachael Stuart, and a score of other notables titled and untitled. "The young couple will start their married life with all the advantages that youth, good looks, money and personal popularity can bestow" beamed the *Yorkshire Post*, while *Eve*, remarking Miss Ashley "immensely rich and pretty," described C-R as "the most sought-after and handsome M.P., who is looked upon as one of the leading lights of the young Conservatives." All gave prominence to the royal aura projected through the connection with the King's nephew, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and played up the story of the Cassel millions.

"Ever since her grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel's death in 1921," informed the *Liverpool Courier*, "Miss Mary Ashley's share of the great fortune has been accumulating," and added that "as the young couple met when Captain Cunningham-Reid was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Miss Ashley's father, Colonel Wilfred Ashley, Minister of Transport, their marriage must be added to the long list of those in which Governors' aides-de-camp and the private secretaries of politicians have wedded their chiefs' daughters." The grimy mill towns of Lancashire revelled in the reflected glory of a local M.P. making good, and every drawing-room in London hummed with excited calculations as to the magnitude of the old man's money. The best estimates put it at six millions.

Sir Ernest Cassel, son of Jacob Cassel, Jewish banker of Cologne, was one of those fortunate financial adventurers born early enough to cash in on Britain's commercial expansion in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era. In 1870, at the age of 17, he left the parental firm for the Anglo-Egyptian Bank in Paris, got pushed out by the Franco-Prussian War and became a clerk with Bischoffheim and Goldschmidt in London, where he rose rapidly to a managerial position. An apocryphal story declares that after he had extricated the firm from some complicated financial commitments the chief offered to raise his salary to £500. "£5,000 you mean," said Cassel. "Yes, yes," agreed Bischoffheim.

In 1878, already passing rich, Ernest married Annette Maxwell, who died a few years later, leaving one daughter, who became Mary Cunningham-Reid's mother. On her death-bed his wife beseeched Cassel to embrace her Roman Catholic faith. He agreed, but after a brief period of honest trying abandoned all effort to conform to orthodox dogma and concentrated on money making, for which he had an unquestioned flair. Leaving Bischoffheim and Goldschmidt he launched out with conspicuous success as a financial freelance. He floated loans for Mexico, China and Uruguay and financed railways in the United States

He was the moving spirit in the Electric Traction Company which built the Central London Railway, opened in 1890. He would have made more out of this, as he afterwards admitted, had he persuaded someone else to construct the railway and himself bought up the land on its western terminus. Entering the armaments racket in 1897, he inspired the amalgamation of the Barrow Naval and Shipbuilding Company with Vickers and acquired for Vickers the newly merged Maxim Gun and Nordenfellt concerns.

The imperialist scramble in Africa was well advanced when Cassel put up the money for the construction of the great Nile dams at Assuan and Assiut. In this instance he did not overlook the land, but bought up large tracts of desert around the dams which, subsequently rendered fertile by irrigation, proved a highly profitable speculation. He also founded the Bank of Egypt, the State Bank of Morocco, and the National Bank of Turkey. From these and other ventures, chiefly abroad, he drew an enormous income. He was in fact the epitome of the economic imperialist and, as was meet in the heyday of an aggressive age, found ample public recognition of his enterprise. Like many other successful buccaneers, he was *persona grata* at the Court and a close personal friend of Edward VII who in the decade following 1899 conferred on him a Privy Counsellorship and five knighthoods, which fixed Cassel's social standing and put the final stamp on his success.*

Living as a rich man should, but with no more enthusiasm than he had felt for the Church, he dispensed charity with a discriminating hand—to the tune of £2,000,000 altogether, it is believed—ran a racing stable, threw big shoots on his large estates and paid big money for Old Masters without knowing the least thing about them. Business had so dominated his existence that after retiring in 1910 he was quite unable to cease making the management of his money a fulltime job. Eleven years later he died at his Park Lane mansion. His death benefited the Exchequer by more than £2,000,000 and, after sundry small bequests, he left his estates, Moulton Paddocks, Branksome Dene, Six Mile Bottom, Hare Park and Brook House, variously to his sister and his two grand-daughters, and five-eighths of the residue also to the grand-daughters. These five-eighths were further divided into eight parts, five of which were put in trust for Edwina and three for Mary until they attained the age of

* Among his decorations and orders were the Red Eagle of Prussia, with a replica set in brilliants; the Turkish Order of Medjidié; Grand Cross of the Bath (Civil); Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George; Grand Cross of Royal Victorian Order; Order of the Rising Sun of Japan; Legion of Honour (Grand Officer and Officer); Cross of the Crown of Prussia; Swedish Order and Star; King Edward Coronation Medal.

21 or married. Edwina became Lady Louis Mountbatten at 20, and Mary at the same age became Mrs. Cunningham-Reid.

Mary's nuptials constituted the event of the 1927 season. The Press rose to the occasion with almost fanatical fervour. No phase of the event was overlooked by the reporters in their search for a new "angle." And it wasn't only the denizens of Mayfair who demanded a day by day commentary on the romance. The proletariat was just as enthralled and absorbed. Typical of the way the story was handled is this highly imaginative account culled from *The People* :

HEIRESS GIVES A 'BACHELOR' PARTY.

HOW THE RICH MISS ASHLEY SAID GOODBYE TO SINGLE BLESSEDNESS ON EVE OF WEDDING.

From "The People's" Special Correspondent.

"Swish! Swish!" says the hair-brush as it moves swiftly through the silken strands of The Girl's beautiful hair.

The rosy lights have just been switched on in the luxurious bedroom. The Girl, as she sits before her dressing-table, gazes thoughtfully, almost sadly, at the reflection of her features in the mirror.

Behind her stands a deft-fingered maid. With the air of an artist she runs the brush this way and that over the glossy sheen of her mistress's perfumed locks.

"Oh, but I am so tired!" sighs the Girl. Merely a murmur, spoken half-aloud, the vague expression of a thought.

But the alert ear of the perfectly-trained attendant has caught the words. She smiles indulgently as she lays down the brush and comb and goes on with the task of preparing My Lady for bed.

A few minutes more and darkness reigns. My Lady, alas, does not sleep. She lies wide-eyed, her thoughts busy with the events of the night that has gone.

How jolly it had all been! What warmth there was in the tone of those seemingly endless congratulations, the feel of those earnest hand-clasps! She had danced and danced until excitement and fatigue compelled her to cease. Then they had drunk her health and the health of her husband to be.

Nothing *quite* like that could ever happen to her again. Life might—and probably would—give her many a new thrill in the undiscovered future—but never again could she experience anything so thrilling and so novel as the joy of that glorious "bachelor party."

Last night she had bidden adieu to girl-hood. She has cast aside, as it were, the last vestige of her childish self.

And to-morrow? . . .

The girl was Miss Mary Ashley, the charming bride of Mr. Cunningham-Reid, whose marriage at St. Margaret's, Westminster, was one of the most dazzling events of the London season.

The "bachelor party" at which her health had been drunk took place at the town house of her sister, Lady Louis Mountbatten, the day before the wedding.

Originality was the keynote of the function. Touching little ceremonies, symbolic of the bride's good-bye to single-blessedness, were staged during the evening. Speeches were made by friends and admirers of the dainty, soignée society beauty.

It was amid the white snow and sunshine of Switzerland that the golden romance which was sealed in London on Thursday had its beginning.

Switzerland is the lover's paradise. Even those who swear by the efficacy of the steamer-deck as a forcing-house for romance have to acknowledge the worth of its match-making qualities.

It happened one day in St. Moritz. A party of laughing, light-hearted society girls, flushed with the health-giving breezes, their eyes bright with the zest of youth, were enjoying the delicious perils of the toboggan-ride.

The snow was firm and buoyant down the whole length of the incline as they set off on their whirlwind dash.

Suddenly, half-way down the steep toboggan-run, somebody leaned too much to the left—crash!—and five frightened girls lay sprawling in the snow.

Ruefully they picked themselves up, uttering faint little exclamations of pleasure at the discovery that everybody was safe. Everybody, that is, except the ring-leader of the expedition—beautiful Mary Ashley, who still lay prostrate in the snow.

Beside her knelt a tall, handsome man. He had, it appeared, seen the catastrophe from afar and had rushed to the assistance of the luckless tobogganers.

And when Mary Ashley opened her eyes she found herself looking into those of the most fascinating stranger she had ever met. It was Captain Cunningham-Reid."

Thus did the high society fairy story provide vicarious thrills for the *hoi polloi*.

"Not since Princess Mary's marriage in 1922 has so great and enthusiastic a crowd flocked to Westminster for a wedding as assembled yesterday to see Miss Mary Ashley and her bridegroom, Captain Cunningham-Reid," enthused the *Daily Mirror* under a full page pictorial splash. "The romance and beauty of this marriage," bubbled the *Daily Dispatch*, "reads rather like a fairy story than a page of real life."

Falling when the Courts had commenced—there were usually four in a season—and when all the Bright Young Things of all ages were careering gaily to the intoxicating peak of the social whirl, the event gained added piquancy by its defiance of the superstition that forbids marriage in May and excited even further interest when an elaborate rehearsal came almost to disaster at the last minute because the bridegroom had forgotten to ask the vergers to open the church. "Nothing daunted," said the *Bystander*, "Captain Bobby reviewed the procession in the street and once more showed the world that his chief and most salient characteristic is—determination; locked doors have never deterred Captain Cunningham-Reid, and all through life he has shown ambition backed by grim perseverance and has carried through his varied projects to brilliant and successful conclusions."

So when the big day dawned a huge crowd packed early into the region of St. Margaret's Church, spilled over into Parliament Square, thronged the adjacent streets and presented the police with a jam comparable with the Armistice celebrations. Time



and again the crowd broke through the cordons of mounted police; women, love-lorn and love-shorn, clambered up the monuments and lamp-posts and men sought visual advantage by balancing precariously on the railings.

"Fashionable London has seldom seen a smarter wedding," commented the *Westminster Gazette*. "There has rarely been such a throng as assembled for the wealthiest and most important bride of the season," said the *Sheffield Independent*. Passing visitors thought Westminster Abbey was staging some major ecclesiastical celebration and foreigners wondered whether there was a coronation, a thought that might well have been inspired by the sartorial splendour of the principals and the guests and the number of Parliamentarians on the scene. "Wonderful," "beauteous," "magnificent," "gorgeous" were the Press descriptions of what the *Star* headlined as a "white and silver pageant." One bedazzled scribe even anticipated Hollywood with the ultra-superlative "stupendous." But most of the crowd had to be content with a glimpse of the costly furs, for a keen wind insisted on making it a typical high spring English day. So vast was the assembly that the crowd stretched all the way from St. Margaret's, next to the House of Commons, through St. James's and Hyde Park right up to Brook House at the top of Park Lane.

Indicative of the level at which the wedding ranked was the half-column devoted to it by *The Times* and the almost full column carried by the *Morning Post*, which listed some hundreds of highly mentionables from among the thousand guests. The guests themselves also demonstrated the importance in which Society held the occasion. Premier Stanley Baldwin and Mrs. Baldwin and daughter Betty were there, along with Princess Beatrice, Prince and Princess Arthur of Connaught, Prince and Princess Andrew of Greece, the four Princesses Margarita, Theodora, Cecile and Sophie of Greece, the Aga Khan and Prince and Princess Obolensky. Prince George, who with the Prince of Wales was visiting King Alphonso in Spain, sent a present from Madrid but failed to get back in time for the ceremony though he managed to catch the reception. Lord and Lady Birkenhead were there, as were Sir Austen and Lady Chamberlain, Sir William and Lady Joynson-Hicks, the Marquis and Marchioness of Carisbrooke, Lady Oxford and Asquith, the Duke and Duchess of Atholl, Lord and Lady Beatty, the Earl and Countess of Lisburn, and lords and ladies representing the whole range of the peerage, from humble barons to a duke of the Royal Blood. There were barts and knights, Cabinet Ministers, famous hostesses and high civil servants, distinguished and undistinguished soldiers, sailors and airmen, practically the whole Diplomatic Corps and, by way of expressing democracy's

deference to the priority of the social pyramid, or just to show there was no ill-will, more than a hundred Members of Parliament.

Enthused the *Tatler*: "That really is a love-match. But how can one possibly describe the wedding itself or the people since all the world was there? Was there a person in London who would willingly have admitted that they hadn't been invited?"

It seemed as if the whole Roll of Precedence had turned out to pay homage to the blessed and blissful pair, for as the *Sunday Times* comprehensively put it, "everybody who is anybody in Society was there." And everybody who was or wished to be anybody made a proper contribution to the two enormous reception rooms at Brook House allocated to the display of the wedding gifts. Appropriately enough, Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin presented an old-world cupboard and some eighty Members of both Houses a pair of silver George III wine coolers with their facsimile signatures emblazoned on the plinth.*

Lady Louis Mountbatten gave her sister an ermine coat with a white fox collar as well as a string of pearls. Colonel Ashley gave his daughter a diamond bandeau, a trefoil diamond brooch with a ruby drop, and a cabochon sapphire ring surrounded by diamonds, while Mrs. Ashley gave a large carved turquoise pendant and Mrs. Kingscote, the groom's mother, gave silver and furniture. The bride's gift to the bridegroom was a dressing case with solid gold fittings and a pair of crystal and diamond links, and his to her a dressing case with gold and tortoiseshell fittings and a gold and platinum evening watch. To the bridesmaids he gave diamond animal brooches and to the pages diamond fox-head bar brooches.

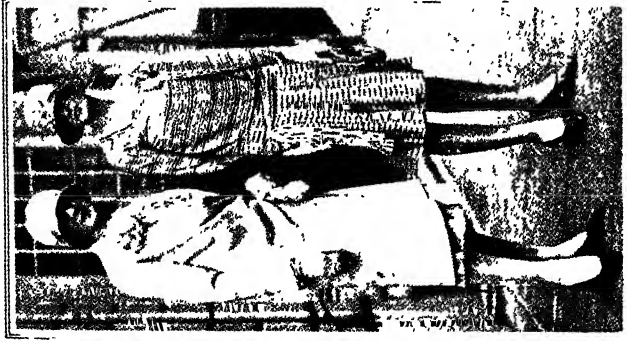
* The following names were engraved :

Swinfen
W. Cope
Colum Crichton-Stuart
B. Eyres-Morsell
Apsley
Inverclyde
W. Joynton-Hicks
Charles Ainsworth
A. J. Edmondson
Herbert G. Williams
Walter E. Elliot
P. J. Hannon
John Ganzoni
Elvedon
C. Kenneth Murchison
Edward Cadogan
Gage
Henry Page Croft
Hugh Cecil
L. Ropner
Peter D. Macdonald
A. J. Bennett
A. J. Campbell Ward
Geoffrey Peto
J. C. C. Davidson
James Agg Gardiner
Ellis Nuttall

F. George Penny
J. T. L. Moore-Brabazon
Douglas H. Hacking
R. D. T. Yerburgh
H. C. Woodcock
Harry Crookshank
A. C. N. Dixey
A. U. M. Hudson
Ernest Makins
Guy M. Kindersley
J. N. Horlick
R. MacDonald
Victor A. Cazalet
S. E. Harvey
Reginald G. Clarry
Waldron Smithers
George A. Gibbs
William Brass
Charles Waterhouse
Wilfred Ashley
Winterton
Ian Macpherson
W. Lindsay Everard
K. W. Atholl
L. S. Amery
Jessel
Douglas Newton
Curzon

Huntingfield
P. Cunliffe-Lister
George Hennessy
W. W. Warner
Walter Guinness
R. S. Horne
Harry Barnston
G. Windsor Clive
L. R. Lumley
G. C. Clayton
R. S. Hudson
W. L. P. Winby
E. A. Ruggles-Brice
Mabel Philipson
N. W. Smith-Carrington
W. H. Sugden
Austen Chamberlain
G. Dalrymple-White
F. N. Blundell
Fermoy
Ancaster
J. S. Courtauld
Stanley Baldwin
T. C. R. Moore
W. C. Bridgman
Bradford
Flunket

AT THE REID-ASHLEY WEDDING.



LADY MASSLEENE AND FER-
RARD AND THE HON. DIANA
SKEFFINGTON



LADY CUNARD, THE HON. MRS.
EVELYN FITZ GERALD, AND
LADY BEAVERBROOK



MISS M. GUINNESS AND MISS
HOPE VERE AFTER THE
WEDDING



THE VISCOUNT AND VISCONTESS
SCARSDALE



LADY ELIZABETH AND LADY
ANNE LINDSAY



CAPTAIN AND MRS. DOUGLAS
HACKING

A FEW OF THE NOTABLES WHO ATTENDED THE REID-ASHLEY WEDDING IN 1927.

From the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden came a pair of exquisitely coloured vases, from Lord and Lady Shaftesbury an old-fashioned silver snuff box. The Aga Khan gave a pair of large antique candlesticks fitted for electricity and a lapis lazuli cup, Lord and Lady Beauchamp a Royal Worcester coffee service, and Viscountess Curzon an antique silver wine-bottle holder. So enormous was the collection that the fortunate recipients had to make preliminary acknowledgement with the aid of a duplicator. There were rare glasses and rich china, exquisite jewellery, lustrous and delicate fabrics, fine pictures, expensive prints, sufficient jewel trees and shagreen cigarette cases to stock a wholesaler and enough antiques to start up in Bond Street or knock the bottom out of the Caledonian Market.

"If anybody fainted," said Lady Limerick at the reception, "they couldn't fall, could they? They'd have to faint standing up."

Jollifications and junketings over, the universally toasted pair, hailed as fulsomely in New York and Paris as in London, departed for their honeymoon. So dense was the crowd outside Brook House that it was quite impossible to get the young couple's car up to the door, so they had to use one that was already there. "But," said the *Daily Sketch*, "before they had gone many yards the crowds were so thick that the progress of the car was stopped, and a cordon of police, supported by the ushers and Lord Plunket (the best-man) and Captain Peter MacDonald, had to lead the car and guard it at each side from the curious women whose chief desire in life seemed to be to see this rich bride."

The honeymoon was a long one. The first blissful days were spent on the Riviera where, according to the *Daily Express*, Lord and Lady Forbes placed Mont Agel, their delightful villa near Monte Carlo, at the couple's disposal. From there they went on to the famous Palazza La Mortola on the Italian Riviera, owned by Sir Cecil Hanbury, M.P., which is renowned for its exotic gardens cascading down to the blue Mediterranean. The long langorous hours were filled with bathing, yachting, motoring, and lazing about by the sea. As always happens on such occasions the future impinged rosily on the sumptuous satisfactions of the present. They looked ahead, made plans, confident, as such fondlings of fortune have a right to be, in the ever ascending rapture of their lot and the deepening intensity of their devotion. Alas for the sweet dreams of eternal delight. The poet Burns had long ago lamented how "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley." But the cautious spirit of old Glencairn's grateful bard finds no abode in love's entrancing bower. In any case, their plans and promises had a most unhappy sequel.

But for the moment no sign of disharmony marred the nuptial scene. After a trip home to top the season with a party

or two in town and to slake the vanity of Warrington constituents with a monster feast, the honeymoon protracted itself to the United States, Canada, and Hawaii, then to New Zealand and Australia via the South Sea Islands. Before leaving, C-R told the Press: "Every young Conservative M.P. ought to visit the Empire in order to broaden his outlook on Dominion affairs. That is my main reason for the tour. Mrs. Reid and I are undertaking the tour as one of the first experiences of our married life because we feel that if we do not go early in married life we shall never go at all."

Travelling with all the appurtenances of their state, including a maid, a valet and some forty trunks, their progress took on the aspect of a triumphal tour. Mayors and sheriffs, Imperial governors and native chiefs turned out to meet them and in some places turned on the whole flood of civic salutation in their honour. In Wellington, Canberra, Fiji, New York, Hollywood, Ottawa and Honolulu the cameras rattled and typewriters clicked to prime the emancipated and the primitive with the progress of "this charming, elegant, immensely wealthy and royalty-related pair."

For seven months the parade continued across the globe. In the process C-R, acquainting himself with the realities of Empire, shot 10,000 feet of film for the edification of friends and constituents. And he not only looked and listened but talked as well. He told New Zealanders that they ought to make place for urban immigrants who though they lacked money could make as good a contribution to the country as the farmers who came with plenty of capital, a criticism which annoyed some of the local bigwigs. Here, as in Australia and Canada, his enthusiasm for expanding Empire aviation gained wide approval as also did his appeal for more frequent exchanges and meetings of British and Dominions parliamentarians. These ideas have found more favour in the past few years than they did then and look like having an important influence on the future of Commonwealth relations. In America he was equally outspoken, castigating the petty bye-laws of the separate States and coming down heavily on prohibition. "You have not the freedom and equality that you think you have," he told a meeting at Colorado Springs. "There isn't much democracy in a law which the rich can evade and which is only enforceable against the poor." To balance matters, he added a tilt at the cost of the Old School Tie. Impressed by the number of Americans who worked their way through college, he declared that "it could not happen in Britain because, to put it bluntly, we are much too snobbish over there," a remark which didn't please everybody in Mayfair.

TRUANCY TRIUMPHANT.

BY way of Suez, Cairo and Paris the newly married couple returned to London for the next social season. Many journals noticed that C-R had relinquished his moustache and his wife had affected a new hair style, "long, worn rather low on the neck in a little bun, which is most becoming." So becoming, it seems, that it immediately became the vogue and set every woman in Mayfair racing away from the shingle. At one stroke the innovating lady was thus stamped as a leader of fashion, a paragon of mode among the Young Marrieds. Consulted by the scribes, the Captain approved the change, saying that if a woman's hair were beautiful he preferred to see it long. The result, apart from a boom in wigs, was a fierce controversy down Westminster way. M.P.s debated the world-shaking issue with increasing fury. Finally, one of the dailies, unable in the midst of growing national difficulties to stand the suspense, prevailed upon them to organise a symposium of opinion. The result was 232 for long, 217 for short, and the next day the journal told the whole amazing story under a tremendous streamer: "House of Commons Anti-Shingle Vote!" And the world breathed again.*

Amid this welter of social activity the Member for Warrington returned to the Commons. When the House resumed after the usual lengthy Christmas vacation, he was again in his place and again hammering away on Service deficiencies, a subject which, in the absence of other claimants, he seems to have made his own.

Not a whisper arose about his having neglected his constituents for so long. On the contrary, typical of the general attitude were the headlines of the *Warrington Guardian*, which featured the homecoming prominently over a number of pages. "WARRINGTON'S EMPIRE AMBASSADORS" it yelled, thus placing the pair on an eminence equalled only by the Prince of Wales, and continued, heavily, down the page: "THE MEMBER AND MRS. REID RETURN. WONDERFUL

* Soon afterwards the *Daily Mirror* was anxiously wondering whether Lady Louis Mountbatten's sister would be responsible for a revival of hair-ribbons, for she had appeared at a hunt-ball wearing a white one. The following month she was once again setting fashion by the ears, for at a dress display at Norman Hartnell's she outdid the mannequins by appearing with a sleek dog under her arm the same colour as her dress; and the *Daily News* commented rapturously: "Dogs, I am told, should match their mistresses' frocks!"

EXPERIENCES OF WORLD TOUR. VALUABLE
KNOWLEDGE GAINED OF BRITAIN'S OUTPOSTS."

In the fulsome screed that followed the delighted constituents learned that the couple were looking extremely well and were told that "as soon as the Captain has advanced with his arrears of work, he is looking forward to renewing his acquaintance with his friends in the constituency."

"It will be remembered," continued the *Guardian*, "that Captain Reid undertook the tour for educational purposes, believing that every Member of Parliament should have first-hand knowledge of the vastness and the immense resources of the Empire. As can be readily imagined, he is now exceedingly busy, but the object with which he set out has been amply accomplished. He has acquired a great amount of knowledge of many parts of the Empire and gathered much information which will be of the greatest possible value in carrying out his duties as a Member of Parliament."

The story went on to describe the "wonderful experiences" and emphasised how the tour had been confined chiefly to the Empire. But despite the complete lack of public protest, the scribe must have found his conscience a trifle touchy, for after asserting pointedly that Java, Malay and India had been deleted from the tour "because the Captain was anxious to be back in time for the opening of Parliament," he felt it politic to still any incipient objection by the anticipatory assurance that "Captain Reid chose a most convenient period for his tour, because the majority of the time he has been away was during the parliamentary recess, and the remainder was occupied by the short autumn session which was mainly devoted to routine work."

Which amounted to saying that nothing much would have gone amiss if the House had closed for two-thirds of the year, those whose presence kept it open having accomplished nothing of importance anyway. Many a time in recent years a like plea might have been advanced, and with some justice, for permanently shutting the whole shop, but there is small logic in belittling an entire establishment to minimise the absence of one of its members. "Considering the invaluable experience the Captain has gained," concluded the *Guardian*, echoing again the common Tory sentiment from somewhat safer ground, "his time has undoubtedly been very usefully occupied, for there are few Members of Parliament who can claim knowledge of our Empire at first hand."

The real reason for the couple's curtailing the tour, it may be noted in parenthesis, was the pending arrival of their first child, Michael, born a few weeks after their return. This event pro-

vided another social occasion, and many of the important people who had squeezed up to the photographers at the famous wedding were present at the christening in the crypt of the House of Commons. Michael Duncan Alec had a distinguished fosterage, Lord Weymouth, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell (now Lord Monsell) and Lord Shaftesbury being the godfathers, and Lady Louis Mountbatten and the late Mrs. Ronald Greville, noted society hostess much favoured by Royalty, the godmothers, while many another notable hankered for a hand at the font.

At the annual jamboree of the Warrington Conservative Association, where the C-Rs received a tremendous ovation, Sir Peter Rylands, Chairman of the Executive Council and a personage of no small weight in the affairs of Lancashire, elaborated the perfection of their Member's conduct to the point where his absence emerged as an unparalleled virtue. "Though one has been deeply sensible of the political loss the temporary absence of our gallant and gifted Member occasioned," he said, "I am as deeply satisfied, as we all must be, that it has been decidedly worth while"; and he thought it might be a "good thing to lay down a rule that no one could be an eligible candidate for Parliament unless he had followed Captain Reid's example and ventured to go all over the world." That the packed assembly of highly respectable Warringtonians harboured a like opinion was demonstrated by the warmth and volume of the applause.

Nevertheless, when full allowance has been made for all the good and bad reasons advanced, it is surprising that a seven months' absence from Parliament should go unremarked as a dereliction of duty. Or perhaps it is not surprising. For where truancy was and is so frequent it hardly becomes anyone to call attention to the rules. Besides, Parliament no longer observes any rule designed to enforce attendance.* On the principle that fools should be governed according to their folly, M.P.s assume a supine freedom to come and go as they like. Some have gone for more than a year at a stretch, and in recent years it has become a Government habit to appoint Members not in the best public odour to official billets abroad, leaving their constituencies unrepresented. Moreover, Parliament is such a hotch-potch of established precedent and out-moded tradition that it remains tangled in feudalism while striving to look like the latest device in the ordered governance of a modern state. Its sessions and vacations, its highdays and holidays, are still hitched to an

* The obligation of Members to attend the House was laid down by statute under Richard II in 1382 and again under Henry VIII in 1514. Neither of these statutes has been repealed. Strictly, therefore, the obligation still applies. But no official notice is taken of the law and no record of attendance is kept. At one time a Member absent without the Speaker's leave had to forfeit his wages. There used also to be a regular roll-call of the House, but none has been taken since 1836.

agricultural calendar that had become obsolete a century ago, and its ecclesiastical connections are not radically different from those prevailing before the Reformation. It is therefore little wonder that M.P.s still regard their duties as something to be filled in as business and personal commitments permit.

But the national newspapers merely focused attention on C-R's contributions to the debates on Empire topics—emigration, the £10,000,000 Australian motor market (most of which went to America) and the geographical arguments for an enlarged Air Force. Simultaneously the gossipmen kept him unremittingly under the social glare. "Captain Cunningham-Reid," remarked the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* socialite recorder, "is one of the most elegant men in the Commons. In formal day dress he approaches the ideal, for an attractive presence and athletic figure are well set off by a superb morning coat. There is restraint in the hint of shirt cuff, the thin white line of vest slip, and the graceful tie which springs from a double collar." Not to be outdone, the *Yorkshire Post*, running the rule over the "distinguished personalities" seen at the Speaker's Reception and the Courts—major events of the season—noted Mrs. C-R as "outstanding even amid the splendour of these picturesque gatherings," and remarked of her husband: "What a handsome man that is!"

To cast a critical eye or pull a caustic pen on anyone present on these royal occasions is of course a gaucherie of which no self-respecting scribe valuing his job would dream. All the eminent ladies and gentlemen, honoured if not always honourable, are there by invitation of the Lord Chamberlain, who occupies the same eminence in relation to Society as the Prime Minister does to Democracy. It is the function of his office to arrange the social affairs of State. Sitting at the head of the social pyramid, he is the Prime Minister of the elite, the top chip in court circles, to which none can attain without passing his scrutiny. Unlike the everyday rabble on the Burgess Roll, those who aspire to active notice on the Lord Chamberlain's exclusive list have to be vouched for in high places and are carefully vetted before every important function. Consequently, none but the socially certified are seen at these opulent exhibitions of democratic equality. And, by the same token, nothing is permitted to dilute the unction that oozes from the pens of the socialite recorders, for they are vetted too.

FORMULA FOR POLITICAL SUCCESS.

IN politics the man who wants to be a success has to move warily. He must not only keep on good terms with important constituents but must above all secure the goodwill of the party pundits who rule the parliamentary roost. Having secured it he has to move even more warily lest he fall from favour, for once fallen the chances of recovery are extremely remote, there being no lack of aspirants to take his place. The man intent on promotion therefore cultivates the friendship of every parliamentary notable and extends his acquaintanceship as widely as possible to all the influential personages outside the House. These outsiders are not infrequently just as powerful as the party moguls. Bankers, big landlords, newspaper magnates and captains of industry, they play a big hand behind the scenes. They broke Lloyd George in 1922 and never gave him the chance of a comeback. The rotund and oratund Welshman had served their turn. Energetic and ambitious, he had hypnotised the masses to unparalleled sacrifices, and where the magic of his oratory did not suffice had not hesitated to put on the hounds of compulsion.

But when the waste and carnage had come to an end and promises could no longer be redeemed by further promises, the wordy magician had to go. Nor did his huge party chest, estimated at two million, avail him anything in his vigorous effort at recovery. The time had come to shatter the piecrusts of popular expectation and Bonar Law was appointed to maintain the balance of forces till the barons of industry and finance placed Stanley Baldwin at the head of "a businessman's government" to do the job. Together with Montague Norman at the Bank of England he ran the show for the best part of twenty years. When Baldwin, a man so lacking in positive virtue that his colourless character reduced the scribes to describing him as "cute," had had enough, they put up Neville Chamberlain, another Big Business tycoon, and kept him up till the tragic consequences of his monumental stupidity brought him down.

Against the power of this backroom dictatorship, the ordinary M.P. has ever to be on guard. That is, of course, if he is an active M.P. The others, the great majority, are safe enough except for the danger of an occasional landslide. They just go on serenely serving their self-esteem, in the constituency doing

nothing and therefore displeasing nobody, and in the Commons cheerfully obeying the orders of the party whips. They retire, most of them, after long years of pleasant ineffectiveness, borne down by simple self-importance, and are soon forgotten. But the man who asserts himself, either because he believes he has a mission or out of sheer individual waywardness, is in a quite different category. His career will not be a smooth succession of easy or unopposed elections. It will be a sequence of ins and outs, a progression to fame or to infamy. At some time or other he is certain to run up against the controlling camarilla, that recondite but very real repository of authority, the ruling figures of which are rarely seen and for the most part only vicariously heard. And when he does he will need to possess the qualities of a Hampden or a Churchill if he is not to withdraw in confusion and admit defeat.

Whether C-R was fortunate or not in missing such a test in his early career only time can tell. What is certain is that after his marriage his prospects were greatly enhanced, and they had been distinctly good before. Moving in the upper reaches of Society, he was *persona grata* all the way from Buckingham Palace to Downing Street. He was wealthy, presentable, and well-bred, had a manner with men and a way with women. Measured by social or political standards, his abilities were far superior to the average. A man of the world, distinguished alike in war and peace, he was rated a pleasant fellow, witty, well-disposed and eloquent, one who knew his way about and gave off just that hint of imperiousness which betrays a fair measure of self-confidence and an appropriate degree of ambition. While he gathered increasing stature in the Commons, his wife held the hearts and hopes of Mayfair with her top-score hospitality and entertainment.

In those days, unquestionably, the C-Rs were the rage. All the lords and ladies and the plain misters and madams of Mayfair and all the blades and dames of the town knew nothing more appealing than an invitation to spend a few days at Six Mile Bottom. For many of them it was the next best thing to an invitation to Balmoral. Six Mile Bottom, the C-Rs' country estate three miles outside Newmarket, with its large house and extensive grounds and covers, was part of the Cassel legacy. Reputed the best shoot in England, it was a magnet for all who fancied their prowess with a gun, and in grandfather Cassel's time was a favourite sporting resort of Edward VII. The place had yielded some record bags. One of C-R's own expeditions, which embraced Sir "Bobby" Eyres-Monsell, the then chief Tory Whip, brought down no fewer than 709 brace of partridges in a single day, and was the talk of West End clubs for years, not to say the cause of much sourness from owners of other shoots.

Apropos of this *The Field* published the following letter:

The Hall, Six Mile Bottom.

Sir,

On September 25th I and eight guns obtained 709 brace of partridges.

As this appears to have created a certain amount of interest I feel that there may be those who might appreciate some first-hand information as to the conditions under which the bag was obtained.

The day was exceptionally fine. I had the usual number of beaters, and I started at our customary time—9.30 a.m. We took over an hour for lunch, and stopped after we had had fifteen drives (some of these being very short ones).

The beat is a large one, and so we were continually getting on to fresh birds. As can only be expected with a bag of 1,418 partridges, a number of birds get pricked and are either picked up at the time by beaters or subsequently by dogs. The pick-up on the following day produced 47 partridges.

My guns were Colonel Ashley, Capt. Birkin, Capt. Boyd-Rochfort, Lord Clarendon, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, Lord Fermoy, Sir Cecil Neumann. No one had three guns.

As I expected at the most 400 brace I was naturally agreeably surprised, and the main reason why we did so well was because not for sixteen years have there been so many birds.

Yours truly,

A. S. GUNNINGHAM-REID.

Following his grandfather's bent for the shoot, the Duke of Kent was a visitor at Six Mile Bottom, and of hardly less august standing were some of the other sojourners there. The Hall was therefore highly popular and an invitation to a C-R shoot was something to be coveted, for in addition to the thrill of the blood-letting there was always the possibility of [climbing to a further peak of acquaintance. There is never a shortage of those amiable raconteurs who like to work the conversation round to the time they went shooting with the Duke.

It was perhaps in consequence of his unique social prestige that the Member for Warrington could, while subscribing his quota to the river of Tory cant, nevertheless go cauterising the political elders. In any case, he railed increasingly against the oldsters in country and constituency even though he toed the line in the Commons divisions. Headquarters naturally disapproved of his outspokenness, but the mandarins, feeling his

credit still outweighed his debit, tactfully turned a blind eye. Warringtonians, now beginning to feel the pinch of the growing economic depression, approved his attitude, hopefully seeing in their Member some promise of lifting the Party and Parliament out of the general morass. Backbenchers also applauded, but viewed in the light of what they applauded later they were probably motivated by social ambitions. Ministers, too, did not withhold a nod of approval, probably from the same motive. A Minister, like any other M.P., has to be careful, and not the least of his cares is to avoid giving offence to anybody who is on the upward trend, especially one so closely linked with the highest.

Ranging socially on the top of the world and standing politically with the ball at his feet, C-R was at this time clearly well in the running for the Ministerial goal, but apparently this did not interest him unduly. Nor was his popularity in the least jeopardised when he intimated he would not contest Warrington at the next election. Rather was he esteemed the more for the open manner in which he announced his decision. Many have been the constituents let down by their candidate's sudden decision to transfer to a safer seat on the eve of a general election, and Warrington Tories were mightily pleased at his regard for their convenience. Left to the last moment they might well have been ditched with a raw man. But C-R gave them practically a year's notice in which to build up his successor who, when the election came round, easily held the seat, a fact which the Conservatives ascribed chiefly to the work C-R had done in the locality. It may thus be safely assumed that he was under no necessity to seek a more secure pitch, nor was any such suggestion made at the time. The fact that Warrington expressed sincere regret at his departure was also good evidence of his security there.

"The news [of his decision] will come as an unwelcome surprise to the multitude of workers and supporters of the Conservative cause in the town, who took him to heart immediately he first came to the constituency six years ago," said the *Warrington Guardian*. "In the House of Commons Warrington has had in Captain Reid a worthy representative who has fulfilled his early promise of ability. His youthful earnestness caused a deep impression on all who saw and heard him during those days of his early acquaintance with Warrington, and on no occasion has he given any cause to shake their belief in him."

"His charming personality and unflinching cheerfulness," said the *Guardian* on another occasion, "even when, as one inexperienced in political warfare, he was faced with difficulties which would have cast others without his sterling qualities into the depths of despair, endeared him to the hearts of Warringtonians. His popularity was such that he achieved the distinction of

securing a record poll of roughly 5,000 over the previous best. This he capped two years later by polling a further 1,400." The journal then explained the reasons for his departure. "In addition to his Parliamentary duties many important business responsibilities have devolved upon him during the past few months. The management of a very large family estate in the South has added to his difficulties, forcing upon him a choice in which even his most ardent supporters are bound to acquiesce." Regretfully, Warrington had to choose another candidate.

That the regret was genuine was shown by the frequent references to the matter over many months right up to the day of C-R's adoption in Southampton. "Captain Reid's record as the Member for the Borough is one of outstanding merit," declared a *Guardian* leader. "Practically the whole of his time has been spent in the service of his constituency. Young Members are allowed little opportunity for speaking in the House, and the many contributions which Captain Reid has made to the debates show how rapidly he made himself competent to take part in the deliberations of Parliament. To the borough itself he has been a constant visitor and besides speaking at innumerable political and social gatherings, he inaugurated the very practical 'at home' where he could be seen personally by any of his constituents in need of help and advice. The work that entailed is little known, but it was perhaps his most notable work. It is not too much to say that a large portion of his leisure time was spent in making investigations, putting forward representations in the right quarter and redressing legitimate hardships suffered by his constituents. The Captain's constituents, irrespective of party, have sound reason to thank him for the many and varied services he has rendered to them."

That, and much more unquoted, was high tribute after three elections and six years' association broken only by the brief interlude which followed the second election.

Some time after his decision to leave Warrington had been announced, and at the request of Lord Apsley, one of the Southampton Members, C-R agreed to contest that southern constituency at the next election. Lord Louis Mountbatten's house, Adsdean, was close by, and this he put at his brother-in-law's disposal. But Southampton did not share Warrington's feelings. Together with Lord Thirlestane, who was also new to this double-barrelled constituency, in a lively tussle against two pairs of opposing candidates, C-R was submerged in the Labour flood. More than 40 per cent of the Tories lost their seats in that general election. In Southampton's total poll of 144,000 the Labour victors netted a joint majority of 4,351, the Liberals having queered the Tory pitch by snatching a decisive 26,000.

This Southampton contest, though lively, was conducted on all sides with the utmost decorum, C-R himself setting the tone by foregoing the advantage of his loudspeaker when early in the campaign the three parties regaled adjacent crowds at a favourite outdoor site near the docks. A *Sunday Dispatch* reporter tells how he witnessed an amusing election incident :—

“ At one of his meetings Cunningham-Reid managed to get in one of the neatest replies I ever heard.

“ ‘ Why did Captain Cunningham-Reid go to Switzerland for a holiday when he ought to be supporting home industries ? ’ he was asked.

“ ‘ I accompanied my wife, who had just presented me with a son and heir,’ replied Cunningham-Reid. ‘ Anyone who says that is not supporting home industries doesn’t know what he is talking about ! ’ ”

After the poll, supporting a vote of thanks to the Returning Officer, C-R congratulated the victors and added : “ It has been a good fight, it has been a clean fight, and I hope that at the end of it we are all good friends.”

The seemliness of this election was marred by only one sensation. It came near the end of the contest when Lord Thirlestane, probably carried away by the glitter of titles on his platform, boldly claimed the King as the chief factotum of the Tory party. Said the noble lord, gratuitously speaking for the whole of Southampton : “ We are going to support the party headed by our beloved King and followed by our great leader Mr. Baldwin.” Against the polite applause of the platform the tittering crowd visualised the redoubtable Baldwin ambling along in the rear of the titled galaxy, a not altogether inappropriate vision. The local Labourites of course protested. Indignantly they wired George V at Windsor Castle, while the *Daily Herald* vehemently bombarded his Private Secretary. But there was no response from Castle or Palace, and it would not have mattered anyway. Thirlestane probably thought that the right time to raise the Royal Standard was just before the poll. It was just bad luck—not to mention the backwash of Baldwinism—that this time it did not secure the intended result.

INTERLUDE FOR FUN AND GAMES

AT this stage there is a break in the political pilgrimage. Having failed at Southampton, C-R was assumed to have retired from politics. According to a contemporary journal he became engrossed in the management of the Newmarket estate, pulling together some 8,000 acres that ought to have been an asset but which absentee ownership had rendered a considerable liability. With his accustomed vigour he seems to have made a success of it. But the work did not halt the entertainment nor interfere with the social round. Six Mile Bottom became a cynosure of the leading stockbreeders—C-R himself gaining many prizes for Suffolk sheep—a trial ground for dog fanciers, and the centre for all the sporting gentry of the Eastern Counties.

The shoots remained a great attraction. "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid," reported the *Daily Sketch* just after the election, "are now entertaining their usual series of autumn shooting parties, where wonderful bags of partridges have been secured. An average of over 300 brace a day has been maintained so far. Air Marshal Sir John Salmond will be shooting there this week. He and the Captain are old friends."

At another time the *Daily Telegraph* announced: "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid will entertain a party at the Hall, Six Mile Bottom, tomorrow for the partridge shooting. Their guests will be Viscount and Viscountess Scarsdale, Lord and Lady Louis Mountbatten, the Hon. Sir Harry Stoner, the Hon. Mrs. Frances Balfour, Sir Felix and Lady Helen Cassel, Sir Philip and Lady Cunliffe-Lister (now Lord and Lady Swinton) and Colonel Wilfred Ashley (Lord Mount Temple)." *The Times*, too, kept its important public acquainted with events at The Hall, as did all the other journals, national and local, simple and snooty, from the *Bystander* and the *Tatler* to *Home Notes* and the *Bury Free Press*.

Along with the entertaining, the managing and the squiring at the Cambridge estate, the C-Rs continued their contributions to the embellishment of the capital. Their every move was meticulously noted. "A sure indication that social life in London is once again stirring," cooed the *Daily Express*, "is the evidence provided by the reopening of a celebrated dance club in Bond Street, where among the many familiar figures adorning the sofa-bar was that of Lord Tennyson, who sat near Mrs. Cunningham-Reid, who wore blue, and her husband and Lady Ashley." They had, the paper informed, just returned from the

Continent and were in the throes of preparing a further series of parties in country and town. One of these was a house-warming which kept the scribes effusing for more than a week. "Captain Cunningham-Reid is a man, as Kipling would say, of infinite resource and sagacity," enthused the *Daily Telegraph*, proof of which was, apparently, that because the new house in Brook Street had no room capable of being turned into a squash court, the Captain decided to hang one on the outer back wall. "And there it is," added the *Telegraph* approvingly, "a precarious-looking extension with no visible means of support."

The *Sunday Times* described the party as "the best of the Little Season," which, for those uninitiated into the mysteries of high life, is the season between the end of the summer holidays and Christmas, a period which used to be spent chiefly on the Continent or in the country but which the motor-car and the airplane now enable the weary holiday-makers to celebrate partly in town. "The meal," went on the *Sunday Times*, "deserves a word to itself, for it had been composed to serve as breakfast as well, and among the dishes were scrambled egg, kidneys and bacon, sausages and mashed potatoes and the humble haddock and kipper." Warming up, the journal rejoiced in the splendour of the ladies and regaled the suburban housewives with a report of how "Mrs. Cunningham-Reid looked delightful in a frock of silver lamé bespattered with small sapphire blue flowers. Her slippers were of the same blue and she wore a beautiful necklace of diamonds surrounding clusters of sapphires . . .", and so on through the sartorial catalogue of hundreds of guests who, "at one period of the evening," supplemented the *Evening Standard*, "were accommodated on huge cushions strewn about the floor, taking a rest from the dance in the entertainment afforded by a highly-amusing cabaret turn."

The *Daily Express* chronicler was "interested to observe that Lady Louis, whose skirts were remarkable, in the days of short skirts, for their brevity, had now plunged from the zenith to the nadir, her white dress being almost the longest in the ball-room." But his study of feminine architecture had not been entirely disappointing, for he observed further that "two of the very short ones revealed the shapely calves of Lady Scarsdale and the Hon. Diana Skeffington," and also remarked on "the pool-like eyes and slender throat of the Marquise de Casa Maury." Later this chronicler really got into his stride, quickened to a poetical tempo, and said: "Some of these women look like modern, beautiful and elegant incarnations of the witches in 'Macbeth,' their fingernails blushing as though coloured in the gore of a hecatomb of goats." Unable to compete with such a rhapsody, *The Lady* contented itself by saying "everyone who matters seemed to be there."

The lad from the *Daily Sketch* must have had a rollicking time, too. No doubt he deserved it. In the process of a long and learned description he sought to show himself an authority on such matters. "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid," he averred pontifically, "are among the few people who really know how to entertain. Their house-warming party in Upper Brook Street could hardly have been better. There was ample room to dance, large rooms to sit out in, a cocktail bar downstairs, Douglas Byng for the cabaret, Ambrose's Band, and, above all, a hot supper quite unlike the usual dance supper in that there were provided simple dishes such as people want at that hour of the morning." This was the menu :

Hors d'Œuvres à la Grecque
Consomme Viveurs en Tasse
Filet de Sole Frit au Citron
Haddock à la Crème
Kippers Grillés
Œufs Brouillés aux Champignons
Œufs Frit à l'Anglaise
Saucisses de Porc aux Pommes Purée
Rognons Grillés au Bacon
Buffet Froid
Salades
Welsh Rarebit
Scotch Woodcock
Gâteau Moka
Corbeille de Fruits
Glaces : Vanilla, Fraise, Chocolat
Macedoine de Fruits Rafraîchis aux Liqueurs

Just "simple dishes." Continued the elegant hack : "Homely kippers, eggs and haddock, you see, instead of the messy and indigestible concoctions which *snobisme* is supposed to demand at a supper dance."

The fame of this impromptu party even got as far as Belfast, where the *Irish Telegraph* reported how "at Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid's notable party the other night kippers and bacon, a famous Yorkshire dish, was served and highly appreciated." It also reverberated in Paris and New York. And no wonder, for the British Press had played it up out of all proportion to its originality or importance. It was just one among scores of night-long Mayfair "do's," a typical example of life among the Bright Young Things in the roaring 'twenties. Yet though it took place on December 17, the *Sketch* was still yelling about it on January 1. Having just overcome the shock of another Labour Government, maybe the news magnates thought it necessary to still the fears of the masses with the assurance that the Little Season was going swimmingly and that all was well.

An outstanding feature of that season, according to the *Sketch*, was the number of "in-aids," elaborate fancy dress functions thrown for the benefit of innumerable charities.

When a dowager took charge of a battery of programme sellers at a midnight revue in aid of the British Legion, the scribes exhausted the whole vocabulary of superlatives on the extraordinary ability she displayed in this onerous task. Little was said about the broken ex-Servicemen whose tragedy provided the licence for the nocturnal jollification.

West End charity parties attracted enthusiastic crowds in those days of mounting economic distress. There was scarcely any limit to the appetite for genteel night-life disguised as social uplift. The world would be a sad place for the poor did not public virtue sometimes issue out of private pleasure! And there is no more effective way of injecting the masses with the proper spirit of gratitude to their superiors than by subscribing to popular charity appeals. Thus by ministering to the wrecks of their system Society is esteemed for the little it gives instead of being condemned for the lot it takes.

But of course it should not be forgotten that Society not only gives alms—it also provides work! Think of the beaters, carriers and loaders in the grand shoots, the dungeoned servants in the private mansions, and the kitchen hands in the nethermost recesses of the grand hotels. Sorry indeed would be the plight of the poor were it not for the stars that give them work and save their own souls by junketing day and night for the benefit of homes and hospitals. In the fullness of their gratitude the poor should remember too the reporters, the slick hard-crawling gossip-men without whose fund of sham sentiment and plenitude of genuine servility the world would be uninformed of the great goings-on.

In the topmost spiral of a gay world of fun and fashion the former Member for Warrington lived and had his being in the period following the Southampton defeat. Relieved of parliamentary duties, he was able to follow his own variable inclinations through the high and exclusive calendar, skyballing through Ranelagh, Ascot, Wimbledon, Cowes and the Royal Garden Parties—where the aspiring pleb is sometimes permitted to gaze upon the great—the Air Pageant, the Academy, the first-nights of the season and all the other preliminaries to Society's Continental exodus.

"The South of France is going to be as popular as ever again this year," burred the *Tatler*. "The Queensburys are off there and so are Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid." It was on this occasion that the papers were full of how C-R had saved

his sister-in-law, Lady Louis Mountbatten, from drowning. Apparently Lady Louis whilst staying at a villa rented by the C-Rs had gone for a swim far out to sea. A sudden storm sprang up and on the return journey the sea got so rough that she became exhausted. Fortunately, her brother-in-law noticed her distress and swam out just in time to tow her back to safety. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting her out of the water because of the force of the waves dashing against the rocks. Commented the *Bystander* : "Edwina Mountbatten was rather shaken after being nearly drowned. . . . Bobbie Cunningham-Reid is a complete hero of course." Other journals threw similar compliments.

This was not C-Rs only life-saving adventure. At Portmadoc in 1944 he was the means of helping the late Wing-Commander Guy Gibson to keep his D-day appointment. Gibson was having a day off with a Canadian airman and set out after dinner for a sail in the bay. At ten o'clock that night his wife and friends awaited his return, and C-R went across the road from the hotel to see whether he was in sight. Sure enough he was—capsized a quarter-mile from shore with a strong tide running. Two men were already rushing to the rescue in a canoe. They too capsized in the the squall that had suddenly blown up, but righting their craft managed to push on and got the Canadian away. They were too exhausted by the current to risk more. Seeing their plight, C-R jumped into the canoe and paddled vigorously out to the distressed sailing-boat. Gibson, numbed with cold and nearing cramp, was hanging on grimly. C-R with difficulty got him into the canoe and back to the hotel. "Damn it," said the Wing-Commander later, seeing the funny side, "I never thought to fall for a squall and see an M.P. rush to the rescue with a fat cigar in his face!" Twenty-four hours later the gallant Gibson was leading his lads into the D-day dawn. Here was a fine front-page story for any newspaper. Imagine the headline—"D.F.C. Saved V.C."—"Crack Pilot of Last War Rescues Ace Fighter of This." Local newshawks, recognising a thrill when they saw it, quickly put the details over the wires. But, believe it or not, the story never appeared. Many people have wondered why. Perhaps the Ministry of Information could have told them.

To return to the 'twenties. "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid," warbled the *Referee* some months after the Lady Louis episode, "who returned from St. Moritz last week, are spending a few days in town before going on to Monte Carlo. Mrs. Cunningham-Reid has made good progress with her ski-ing, a sport at which the Captain is a well-known expert." A little later the *Daily Telegraph* announced that "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid will leave this week for a cruise to the West

Indies." The *Daily Mirror* registered at another time how "Sir Philip Sassoon has lent Trent Park to Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin, while he himself goes off to meet his friends, Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid, for tennis and Easter cheer at Le Touquet," where their opulent, gigantic and glittering black Bentley had been spotted.

Back in London, the C-Rs played host to Charlie Chaplin, who had come over to launch his *City Lights* on the metropolis, a circumstance which afforded reams of gossip copy. Entering into the spirit of West End social competition, Charlie himself threw a £5,000 party at the Carlton. It was a stupendous entertainment backed by a colossal spread. Gossipmen, however, voted the C-Rs jamboree, held a few nights later, "a more intimate affair." It was, in the words of the *Graphic*, "quite the best."

Then the birth of another boy, Noel Robert, called a temporary halt to the whirl. His arrival also started a new fashion in present-giving and evoked from the *Daily Express* the startling discovery that "Lady Louis Mountbatten has just given her sister, Mrs. Cunningham-Reid, a beautiful topaz and diamond necklace in commemoration of the birth of her son on Christmas Day." The *Daily Telegraph's* discovery was even more significant, to wit: "If there is such a thing as a fashionable age just now it might be said to be under a year old, in which category come the son of Mrs. Cunningham-Reid and the twin daughters of Lady Alexandra Metcalfe."

The *Daily Express* thought it important to tell its readers that "the Cunningham-Reids live next door to the ex-Prime Minister and profit by the policemen who guard his home," and went on solicitously: "Special protection indeed would not be superfluous for their own house, for it is full of treasures. Priceless pieces of crystal and lapis-lazuli and jade are arranged in cupboards lined with old, dulled looking-glass, and treasures of all sorts are scattered about the rooms, many of which are panelled in pickled Austrian pine. One ingenious novelty consists of an illuminated mantel-shelf which throws up the light on the objects upon it. Another is the framework on the staircase leading to the squash-rackets court. This was made by Russian refugees, and neat little figures on it represent people engaged in desperate squash-racket duels." *Vogue*, not to be outdone, went into raptures about "that lovely library in pickled rare woods and soft colourings," and the *Sunday Graphic* dilated upon the invisible ray burglar alarm installed to guard the treasures. "Once the current is switched on it is virtually impossible, so ingeniously are the points arranged, to move more than a yard in any direction without interrupting the ray. Normally when this happens

a buzzer goes off in the bedroom of every member of the household. The burglar is the only person who does not hear it ! ”

The nurseries also came in for their pæan of praise. Burbled the *Daily Telegraph* : “ The furniture, which is cream, has an orange frieze of ducks and dragons running round its edges. Plain cream walls are relieved with a few farmyard pictures in oak frames ; but lovely soft woolly rugs, with padded animals in royal blue, are laid down on cork lino floor covering, which is also hygienic. Master Michael Cunningham-Reid, too, owns his own special chair, one which plays a tune as the owner sits down.”

It was Master Michael, who, according to the *Daily Sketch*, when he met the Duchess of York, instead of bowing stood on his head in front of her, and the *Sunday Chronicle* told how the same young man, when taken to see his baby brother about an hour after birth, “ eyed him suspiciously for a couple of minutes and then suddenly gave him a colossal dig in the ribs and said ‘ Get up ! ’ ” Surviving this, the baby was christened to the god-parentage of Lady Forres, Lady Brecknock, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Air Marshal Sir John Salmond and Mr. Robert Hudson, subsequently Minister of Agriculture, who gave his god-son an antique silver mug. Noel Robert was possibly named after him. Douglas Fairbanks went to the christening and gave the infant a sapphire and diamond safety-pin, and the *Sunday Times* informed its exalted readers that “ Lady Alice Ashley, who is over 80, was amongst the invited guests.” Not a word, though, about the uninvited guests, or whether they got any of the “ champagne in golden glasses ” that the *Bystander* enthused about. Observed the *Daily Express* gossipier : “ I should be failing in my duty as a social chronicler if I did not record the following facts : (1) The baby did not cry. (2) A magnificent stork surmounted the cake at the tea-party. (3) The proud mother wore one of the new transparent lace caps.”

The C-Rs, it appears, were everywhere in demand. *The Times* announced their being invited to dinner by Sir Samuel and Lady Maud Hoare to meet the Prince of Wales. They were practically the only untitled people present. *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* disclosed that “ Mrs. Cunningham-Reid wore a superb chinchilla cloak over a figure-moulding white satin gown, a wonderful necklace and long earrings and many bracelets, all of diamonds, giving brilliance to the soft subtleties of white and silver.”

The *Daily Express*, providing a peep into the Six Mile Bottom establishment, told how Sir Henry Segrave, Lord Plunket, Sir Samuel Hoare, Commander Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, and

their respective wives "will be able to enjoy not only the magnificent shooting, but also what is now the favourite indoor resort of the Cunningham-Reids and their guests. This is a converted cellar, known as the games-room, which is equipped with facilities for playing every conceivable game of chance or skill—darts and ping-pong included—and with a cinema. A cocktail bar, too, stands in this room. It is furnished with a rail, and with all the provisions likely to enhance the accuracy of those playing the games of skill." Neville Chamberlain, during one of his frequent visits, was initiated into the game of ping-pong.

At one of the shoots, which bristled with important folk from Debrett, the host was unexpectedly prevented from going out with the guns the first thing in the morning, so it fell to the head-keeper to place the guns. Having a proper sense of precedence, he said: "Your Grace will kindly take the middle butt; the earls to either side of His Grace; barons and baronets down the hedge further on; and you, Mr. Smith, walk with me and you may get an old hare!" Nor were the servants entirely overlooked, the *Daily Sketch* telling of a woman who applied to become the C-R's cook: "She was very smartly dressed in tweeds and seemed satisfactory, but there was one condition attached to her acceptance of the post—that she would be allowed to bring her two Labrador dogs with her."

How Mrs. C-R once went to a premiere at the Strand without her husband made big news for the *Daily Express*: "Is Bobby with you?" someone asked her. "No," she replied, "he had to go to a Masons' dinner, poor sweet." It was such gastronomic strain that no doubt compelled C-R to take a cure at Baden-Baden. Mrs. C-R was more careful, for according to the *Sunday News*, she "took peas and beans at the meat course without the meat, and just played with a quail, but finished up with quantities of strawberries and an apple." Reported the highbrow *Sunday Referee*: "The Cunningham-Reids like to visit London just a little in the season, give wonderful parties and then depart to the country or abroad. They are among the young married people who openly enjoy each other's society." Sometimes they wandered off for short trips to the West Indies, the islands of Dalmatia, to Palm Beach, the Lido, Corsica or more often, Switzerland.

The C-Rs just could not move or do anything without every detail being recorded. From London the *Daily Express* told the world that "certainly no one could have looked more care-free than Don Alfonso when I saw him at Mrs. Cunningham-Reid's party the other night. This was as enjoyable a party as any that I have attended this season—largely because its informality was in welcome contrast to the caterers' palm-tree and gilt-chair



stuffiness of the average debutante dance. Evening dress, to begin with, was not obligatory. One or two women made this dispensation the happy excuse for displaying the latest and most elegant pyjamas." "Film-stars who graced this notable party were Miss Norma Talmadge and the wealthy and piquant Miss Marion Davies.

"Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid," continued the *Daily Express* "had invested their squash court with the atmosphere and attributes of a typical Parisian *boite*. Spot-lights, little tables all round the court, corn-beef hash to eat, campstools to sit on, a first-rate cabaret, with a marvellous banjo-player who also succeeded in imitating a bird's song on the violin. . . . It was all very gay and amusing. And at 4.30 yesterday morning I found myself taking part in a lively game of musical chairs!" Taking up the narrative, the *Daily Mirror* added: "Green and red searchlights swept the garden, in which little green tables bore a strangely assorted burden of beer, champagne, lemonade, sandwiches, packets of cigarettes and single cigars in paper cases. Lady Louis Mountbatten, in blue, acted as barmaid." King Alfonso sat on the floor. In fact it was all delightfully informal.

But occasionally there had to be a change from such labours. Wherefore the *Evening News* told how "Captain and Mrs. Cunningham-Reid will soon now be preparing their villa at Antibes—I suppose after the Courts are over, for Mrs. Cunningham-Reid is attending one of them—where, during the summer they are intending to entertain relays of guests." This blurb appeared under the caption "The simple life"!

Those newshawks sure missed nothing that had the remotest connection with the C-Rs. The children were fair game for the sloppiest twaddle. Even the dogs were considered sufficiently important for an occasional spate of drivel, "Otto Cunningham-Reid" (presented just like that) receiving almost a whole column of obeisance one day in the *Express*. Otto was a dachshund, of whom Mrs. Cunningham-Reid was so fond, said the *Modern Weekly*, that "she commissioned Mrs. Klitgaard-May, the well known Danish artist, to paint the little animal's portrait. The result is most fascinating. Mrs. Klitgaard-May tells me that Otto is an excellent sitter and posed himself. He is portrayed in a characteristic attitude sitting on his tail—there being a small person in the nursery who is very fond of tail-pulling."

So, in the midst of the darkening economic crisis, the giddy round went on: But neither the hectic excitements of Monte Carlo nor the polite tittle-tattle of London drawing-rooms could still the nervousness consequent on the increasing stagnation of commerce, the crash of Continental banks, and the swelling army of jobless men and women in Britain no less than abroad.

It was about this time that whispers got around that the ex-Member for Warrington was about to resume his political career. All the snob journals were delighted to hear of his pending return to politics. It provided a basis for something different from the usual slop. He was still to the columnists a coming young man, pleasant, informed, quick-witted, a cosmopolitan Englishman seized, they said, with a keen desire to help rescue the country from the mess into which the indolence of the mass and the ineptitude of the party leaders had plunged it. He would, of course, return to the Commons as a Conservative, and a number of constituencies were known to be competing for his services. For his own part, C-R declared his readiness to fight the Socialists or Liberals, preferably the Socialists and Liberals, in "any constituency anywhere," no matter how stiff the fight and irrespective of the chances of success.

In view of what followed, it might have been better had he curbed his combativeness, given more scope to his caution or taken a firmer grip of his idealism, or whatever it was that inspired again his lust for the hustings. Had he jumped into a new constituency sooner or dallied longer in the gracious embrace of Mayfair this story would probably not have had to be told. But by some curious turn of fate, while looking around for a place he could represent, the call came from the locality he had long lived in. A darling of fortune, to whose efforts everything had so generously responded, he had little reason to suppose that the timely and unexpected opportunity was to mark a break in his long run of luck. But when he grasped the invitation to succeed Sir Rennell Rodd as the Member for St. Marylebone, his troubles began. For it was in becoming the M.P. for his own Borough of St. Marylebone that he committed his "original sin."

THE BATTLE OF ST. MARYLEBONE.

TERRITORIALLY the second largest of London's 62 parliamentary divisions, the sedate borough of St. Marylebone is distinguished for the great preponderance of professional, commercial and unoccupied people in its (pre-war) seventy thousand population. Bounded on the South by Oxford Street, on the West by Edgware Road and extending into the select regions of Regents Park and the borders of Hampstead before terminating on the East at Tottenham Court Road, it embraces many fashionable squares, many well-known trade establishments and a number of famous streets. Like every other metropolitan borough, although in a lesser degree than most, it conceals behind the variegated facades of its major streets some insalubrious areas of overcrowded apartment houses and a few spots of dilapidated slum. There are also many square miles of middle-class residences. The measure of the Borough's substance may be estimated from the size of its rateable value, which, at £3,000,000, is greater than that of many big cities, including Sheffield, Leeds, and Newcastle.

In relation to its total population, the borough houses probably more wealthy families than any other parliamentary division. To meet their needs there is an abundance of trading establishments, most notable of which are probably the host of motor-car marts where in peace-time the salesmen, resplendent as tailor's dummies, stand around elegantly, ten to a car, eternally talking and for ever paring their nails. It is a handy area for actors, musicians, cabaret artistes, conjurors and the like, and also harbours a vast assortment of antidote pluggers who batten on the profits of excess, such as the self-effacing apothecaries and self-publicising psychiatrists, the genteel purveyors of high stimulants and low narcotics, the face-lifters and foot healers, the stomach and kidney experts, the guardians of gullet and gizzard, the lung and liver specialists, the totem-men of thyroid and prostate, all the oracles of heart and head, some of them quacks, many more general practitioners and the rest the experts of Harley Street, the high priests of the medical profession.

In this area C-R had spent much of his life. Over a period of ten years he had taken an interest in Marylebone's civic affairs, paid his rates, supported in Parliament the same policy as its itinerant M.P.s and played his part as a member of the local Conservative Union. As far back as 1921 he had chaired the

Marylebone Young Conservatives and in 1922 had unsuccessfully sought to represent on the Borough Council one of the poorer wards that had always declined to succumb to the appeals of Municipal Reformers. Subscribing to numerous local organisations, he was personally active in many, among them the Marylebone Conservative Club, of which in 1931 he had become vice-president.

In February of that year, Sir Rennell Rodd, the sitting M.P., aged about 72, informed the local Conservative council that he wanted to retire. Sir Rennell, an ardent but reticent Tory, had represented the constituency for three years after some 45 years spent in the Diplomatic Service. He had come to Marylebone on the recommendation of the Tory highups in succession to Sir Douglas Hogg, who, having held the seat for six years, became Lord Chancellor, and then disappeared into the peerage under the title of Lord Hailsham. In the course of a decade therefore this safest of safe seats had been warmed by three representatives—the other being Sir Samuel Scott, who had retired to make way for Hogg—and now, with the departure of Rodd, it was to be warmed by a fourth. Rodd, it was known, was also scheduled for the Lords, like a long line of others in this peerage factory, including Sir Harry Farquhar (who became Lord Farquhar), and Lord Robert Cecil (later Viscount Cecil), who had gone before.

It was therefore taken for granted that among the possible successors to Rodd were others bent on finding a place in the titular hierarchy. Marylebonians didn't like it. Despite their pride at the illustrious elevations, there was a feeling that the constituency had become a pawn of the Conservative Central Office, a plum to be handed out to selected servitors of the party caucus. The discontented burghers therefore thought it time to give some stability to the local parliamentary representation, and having been honoured in so short a period by a distinguished lawyer and a distinguished ambassador, they had been looking around for somebody who, while not being too distinguished to attend to the interests of the constituents, would yet be of sufficient standing to give Marylebone appropriate weight in the House of Commons.

With C-R on the spot and ready to serve, they had not far to seek. Already a veteran of four elections and a promising politician, he was the answer to their prayers. Young and of engaging personality he was a pleasing orator and had in addition just the right kind of background to give what dignity was necessary to a safe seat, and the ability to keep it safe.

A large body of active Marylebonians therefore plumped for him, and within a few days of the retiring Member's announce-



MARYLEBONE BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS 1922 No. 3 (CHURCH ST.) WARD.

C.-R. with a group of fellow Municipal Reform Candidates.

ment it thus seemed that everything was fixed for the succession. An unopposed return, they thought, would save the Borough the dislocations of a by-election, and Marylebone would slide sedately on. But C-R's supporters counted without the Tory high-ups. This was their choicest "in and out" seat, not to be picked up by one who might not vacate it when asked, and more especially by one who had been showing signs of kicking over the traces. The folk at Central Office soon showed they had their own ideas about the representation of Marylebone, although for the moment they had clearly been caught on the hop.

More versed in the ways of diplomacy than of party management, Sir Rennell Rodd seems to have overlooked notifying Central Office of his precise intention. Though rumour of his retirement had seeped into the newspapers on and off from the time of the 1929 election—when he had secured a majority of over 15,000 in a three-corner fight—he made no positive announcement till February 2, 1931, when he intimated his intention direct to the Marylebone Conservative Union. Central Office, who had expected Sir Rennell to hang on until the next election, were surprised when they heard of his sudden decision. Deprived thus of the opportunity to prepare the Borough for their own nominee they had to rush one in as speedily and discreetly as circumstances would allow.

Meantime began the local scramble for the succession, a scramble rendered all the keener by the number of Tories deprived of their seats in the previous general election. Flying swiftly through the Borough in C-R's trail came dozens of other names, all claiming some measure of Central Office approval and each whipping up some modicum of support in the locality. Faced with so many claimants to local honour, the Executive Committee met on February 5 and reduced the aspirants to a short list of four for presentation to the Council of the Union. On this list, apart from C-R, were Sir William Ray who, in the guise of a Municipal Reformer, led the Tories in the L.C.C., Alderman Dean, a former mayor of Marylebone, and Sir Ian Fraser, chairman of St. Dunstan's who, though already the prospective candidate for St. Pancras North, where he had failed at the last election, had generously "offered himself for nomination" with the explanation that when he accepted the St. Pancras candidature he was "unaware that an opportunity would so soon present itself in Marylebone."

Having cleared the Executive hurdle the next thing was to get past the Council meeting. This was scheduled for February 9 and in the four intervening days, knowing C-R to be assured of a good reception, the local diehards, prompted by Central Office, set out to encompass his defeat. They were

joined by most of the London journals, the *Daily Telegraph* taking the lead. "Peterborough," the *Telegraph* diarist, had got hot off the mark the day before the Executive meeting, remarking how "Capt. Reid, who in 1929 was defeated at Southampton—until then a Conservative stronghold—whither he had migrated from Warrington, apparently has no strong predilection as to the type of constituency through which he will seek to resume his House of Commons career. Town or country, industrial or residential, all are the same to him. Now his name is prominently to the fore in St. Marylebone." After that refined piece of denigration, "Peterborough" went on to predict that "whichever candidate gets the support of Lord Hailsham will have achieved a big advantage over his competitors," and declared with evident delight that "in this direction Capt. Reid has not hitherto been successful." The next day—the day of the Executive meeting—the *Telegraph* further told how "an exceptionally large number of vice-presidents might be expected to attend the local Conservative council next Monday when the new parliamentary candidate will be chosen."

To make the sequence clear, it had better be explained here that in accordance with the constitution of the Marylebone Conservative Union the candidature had to be considered first by the Executive Committee, which then referred it to the Council which, in turn, made a recommendation to the general meeting of the Union, which included the rank and file.

The day after the Executive meeting the *Telegraph* was at it again, observing that "during the past few weeks the Marylebone Union has had a remarkable accession of strength to its list of vice-presidents, a position for which the main qualification is payment of £5 subscription to the Union funds," and remarking that "Captain Reid, who has migrated there from Southampton, which he unsuccessfully contested at the general election, will be able to look to the new vice-presidents for strong support in his appeal for adoption as the prospective candidate."

Put with such deliberate indelicacy the point of those statements could hardly be avoided, but the *Telegraph*, doubting perhaps the perspicuity of its Marylebone readers, came back at them once more the following day. "Interest in the choice of a Conservative to contest St. Marylebone is not, I find, limited to the constituency," confided "Peterborough." "As I stated yesterday, more than fifty new vice-presidents have been enrolled and of these I observe that between fifteen and twenty reside outside the constituency. The interest so displayed in the affairs of Marylebone spreads as wide as Clanricarde Gardens, far down the Bayswater Road, to Courtfield Gardens, in S.W.5,

and is noticeably strong in the heart of Mayfair. Green Street has sent a strong quota, while St. James's and even Victoria are displaying their active interest by qualifying to have a say in the choice of Marylebone's next candidate."

To make sure that the piquancy of the situation should not be missed, this calculated appeal to parochialism was played up at the top of a news column instead of taking its place in the diary. The following day, being a Sunday, the *D.T.*'s stable companion took up the theme. "It is understood that the sudden increase in the number of vice-presidents and the voting power which their subscriptions give them," said the *Sunday Times*, "is to be raised at tomorrow's meeting of the Union." Somebody, somewhere, had clearly got things moving. A faint indication of who or what lay behind the move emerged from the rest of the story, the journal revealing that "so far as can be ascertained in official quarters, there is a strong hope that Sir William Ray will be selected."

On the Monday the *Daily Telegraph* took over again and, confirming the "hope in official quarters," revealed that "especial interest attaches to Sir William Ray's candidature, for it was only last Tuesday that he was asked to allow his name to go forward." Raising an eyebrow over the bacon and eggs, Marylebonians were not long denied the source of the asking. "A short time ago," continued the *Telegraph*, "members of his party in the L.C.C., where Sir William is often referred to as the Prime Minister of London, addressed a special memorandum to Mr. Baldwin in which they expressed their conviction that Sir William's great political gifts should be placed at the disposal of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons. His candidature for selection at St. Marylebone is the outcome of this strong recommendation."

But the recommendation, even with the predicted support of Lord Hailsham, failed to tip the scales at the Council meeting which took place that night. Starting at eight, the meeting stormed on till near midnight. All three former M.P.s were present, Sir Samuel Scott presiding and the other two urging the claims of Sir William Ray, while Mrs. C-R, with others, voiced the merits of her husband. Each of the would-be candidates talked in turn, then retired while the debate continued and the vote was taken. When at length the first ballot was recorded C-R emerged with 67 votes against Ray's 35, the others bringing up the third and fourth places. Then came the final ballot between the two, the count showing 86 for C-R and 80 for Ray. The close vote fairly reflected the keenness of the debate. What it did not confirm was the suggestion that the new vice-presidents had been appointed to stack the ballot.

The *Daily Telegraph* and the rest of the caucus journals were naturally much upset at the Council's refusal to endorse the demands of the Borough's former M.P.s. So next day they began to crib about the narrowness of the voting. As the result had been declared very late the previous night they probably lacked time to think up another line of attack. But behind the scenes they were by no means idle. The full Union meeting having been fixed for Wednesday evening and promising to be explosive, they had to hurry. And hurry they did, for on Wednesday morning—two days after the Council meeting—they came out with an obviously inspired suggestion that the candidature might be reconsidered.

Here again the *Daily Telegraph* made most play of the "news," emphasising "the acute divergency of opinion in Marylebone" and declaring "it would not be surprising if the whole question were at tonight's meeting referred back to the Council." Then, striving to stir up local vanity, but with complete disregard for the Borough's parliamentary history, it declared the outcome of the meeting "by no means a foregone conclusion, for Conservative boroughs of this standing, and with such traditions, are not accustomed to have candidates thrust upon them, nor do they easily acquiesce in the adoption of a candidate who apparently does not command support from fifty per cent of the Council members resident in the constituency."

Fed with that slice of historical perversion, innocent Marylebonians were supposed to conclude that it wasn't the *Daily Telegraph* that was trying to thrust a candidate on them!

From the enthusiasm with which C-R's nomination had been received throughout the Borough there was no good reason to suppose the meeting would refer the matter back—or that, if it did, the Council would alter its recommendation. The business of a newspaper, however, is often to create an atmosphere and to predispose its readers to its desired line of action by suggesting the action is already taking place. Let a glaring headline assert that the police may have to be called out to control the huge crowd expected to greet the arrival of some film star and sure enough the crowd will be there. Similarly, if some big event, say a prize fight, looks like being a box-office flop, it is only necessary for the promoters to get a par in the press alleging a tremendous clamour for tickets and the success of the show is assured. Or persuade a couple of stage-struck girls to swoon at the appearance of a Sinatra and his next appearance will have the whole show swooning. Effective suggestion is the whole art of successful publicity. No self-respecting election agent dare rail to exploit it. 'He who gets his candidate's picture into the greatest number of windows, even though half the houses be empty, is likely to get his man home.

Determined to take no risk that the "reconsideration" might not be countenanced, the *Telegraph* added to its story a list of the new vice-presidents, prominently displaying those resident outside the Borough and taking care to foster the impression, as it had done all along, that the whole bag of recruits had been buttoned by the allegedly gate-crashing C-R. Simultaneously the fruits of the previous day's flurry appeared, very discreetly, in *The Times*. Presented as a letter over the names of seventeen M.P.s, it appealed to Sir Rennell Rodd to withdraw his resignation on the ground that "the House of Commons will suffer very much if it is deprived of his counsel."*

It was apparently quite in order for seventeen M.P.s representing other constituencies to interfere in Marylebone's affairs—and equally natural that the *Daily Telegraph* found nothing to cavil at. Geography was only important where the yield was mud!

But if the sincerity of the letter was not above reproach, there can be no question about its purpose nor the circumstances that called it forth. Caught short by the suddenness of Sir Rennell's announcement the Central Office had failed to get its man across and the only remaining recourse was to close the gap till a more propitious moment. As the contents of the letter slid from lip to lip feeling among the local Conservatives soared to election dimensions. What with the preliminary defeat of the local and national bigwigs and now the prospect of reference back at the behest of their underlings there was ample material for a most exciting meeting. Adding to the interest of metropolitan politics there was also the spectacle of Tories fighting Tories in East Islington and Paddington where Central Office was itself being assailed in two bye-elections by Empire Crusaders under the leadership of the redoubtable and sprightly Lord Beaverbrook. Inevitably the violence of the wider dispute lent fury to the Marylebone squabble and it was with lively expectation that the crowd gathered for the "reconsideration" at the local Baths that night.

Unfortunately for the fun of the capital the explosion did not materialise. Though the temperature ran high there was nothing to dispute. Anticipating Sir Rennell's intention, C-R got in straightaway after the chairman and, robbing the caucus of their thunder, intimated his willingness to stand down in the event of Sir Rennell wanting to carry on—a move that brought

* The 17 M.P.s were: Baniel, H. S. Cautley, J. B. Brunel Cohen, Colum Crichton-Stuart, R. P. Croom-Johnson, Anthony Eden, Ralph Glyn, E. C. Grenfell, C. W. Baillie Hamilton, T. C. R. Moore, Clive Morrison-Bell, W. Ormsby-Gore, A. M. Samuel, W. J. Stewart, Titchfield, Victor Warrender, A. West-Russell.

the sympathies of many neutrals to C-R's side. The upshot was that Sir Rennell, who had made up his mind and needed no persuasion, agreed to sacrifice another spate of his shortening days to the public service. C-R probably realised that if he allowed his own candidature to be confirmed—as he could have done—Sir Rennell would automatically withdraw his resignation and thus give the caucus time to nurse a successor. On the other hand, by making a magnanimous gesture and then lying low, C-R probably calculated he might lull his opponents into a false sense of security. He clearly thought it better to trim to the wind of discretion and await the co-operation of Father Time. And disappointed Marylebonians, cheering wildly as he drove away, seemed, however regretfully, to approve his decision.

Marylebone's crisis was therefore postponed. Central Office hoped that before Sir Rennell's inevitable departure C-R would avail himself of some other opportunity. "In the event of him favouring this course," opined the *Telegraph's* indefatigable "Peterborough," "there are, I fancy, other seats in the immediate environs of London which do not present the peculiar difficulties now associated with Marylebone." But C-R, having staked his claim, did not neglect Marylebone. Naturally, the affair of the vice-presidents remained for some time a source of suspicion. But gradually it became known that their much-noised influx had little or nothing to do with C-R's nomination for on the Executive Committee which had placed him at the top of the short list sat not a single one of the new vice-presidents!

Much light was subsequently thrown on the whole matter by Sir Samuel Scott, the Union's Chairman and an opponent of C-R, in a letter to the *Marylebone Record*, the local weekly. Craving space for "a final word on the recent events in Marylebone" Sir Samuel wrote: "I have been as carefully as possible through the list of the new vice-presidents and so far as I am able to judge 14 or 15, including his wife and his mother, joined through the direct influence of Captain Reid and three or four through that of Captain Ian Fraser, and the remainder as the result of the appeal." C-R had, it appeared, been asked by Sir Samuel to assist the Union's appeal for funds by recruiting some new vice-presidents. To suggest that 15, even if they were all present, could pack a council of 250 was therefore ridiculous.

The other new vice-presidents, as Sir Samuel observed, were brought in as a result of the general appeal sent out by the Union. This appeal was no secret and was pretty widely broadcast. Nor was there anything unusual about the Union inviting members to become vice-presidents at £5 a head. One of the biggest appeals was made in the year of Sir Douglas Hogg's election. Said Sir Samuel: "A large appeal was launched by

the Union in the year 1922-23 and as a result of that appeal 64 new vice-presidents were elected, and of these 18 did not reside within the Borough." There is no record of the caucus yelling about "packing the Council" at that time—Hogg being selected—nor was there a single protest about some of them living outside the Borough.

Had there been any real objection to the admission of "outsiders" on grounds of principle, the caucus would have laid it down in the rules, whereas in fact the constitution of the Union had always left membership specifically open to all and sundry, without residential or other restriction, so long as they were "good supporters of Conservative and Constitutional principles." Had the rules held the contrary, Sir Samuel himself would have been excluded. Residing in Westminster, he had been Marylebone's M.P. for twenty years and was still the Chairman of the Union's Council.

Clearly the caucus were making much ado about nothing. They were annoyed that C-R had gained the nomination by strict conformity with their own rules. But he had not got back to Parliament yet, and as he had now completely blotted his copy-book by flouting headquarters and defeating their nominee, Sir William Ray, they were determined to do their utmost to keep him out.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAY OF THE PARTY CAUCUS.

FRUSTRATED in their first efforts at local democracy, Marylebonians were distinctly unquiescent under the dead hand of the ruling caucus. With time to think things out they became so annoyed at the sitting member's apparent willingness to shilly-shally with the representation that they requested C-R to respond to the spirit rather than the formal decision of the general meeting and to annex the candidature under the authority of the Council vote. This, however, he declined to do. Consequently, when at the end of the year the MacDonald-Baldwin conspiracy issued out in a National Government, C-R made no effort to contest another seat nor to set up in opposition in St. Marylebone. Instead, and much to the advantage of the local organisation, he threw his weight behind the official nominee, and helped Sir Rennell to retain the seat with a majority of 33,000 over his Labour opponent.

The caucus was delighted at the result, but all the same there was considerable perturbation behind the scenes that C-R had not yet transferred his affections elsewhere. He had in fact been invited to seek adoption in a number of other constituencies, in five at least of which—including Bury St. Edmunds, where a part of Six Mile Bottom was situated—he had been more or less assured in advance of favourable consideration. Evidently these did not appeal to him, for he continued to apply himself to Marylebone affairs. Instead of setting out, however, to smoothe the way of succession, he went on singeing the party beards, carrying his incendiarism even into the sedate atmosphere of the Primrose League, where on one occasion he had the temerity to contrast Baldwin's pious sentiments about the political claims of youth with the actual party practice when youth clamoured at the door. "You can understand it from the chieftains of the rival camp," he said, measuring up the ages of the Labour Cabinet, "but it is just the same in our own. When we claim a place in the determination of affairs, we are met by the ancient stonewallers who tell us 'There is plenty of time for you'! It is surely time we awoke to the fact that we have passed the sleepy Victorian era when the House of Commons was regarded as the best club in the world."

The applause betokened that the local application was not entirely lost. Keeping the speaker busy, other audiences applauded similar sentiments as the months went by. It goes without saying that in high quarters such vigorous utterances

rang quite another bell, and the chieftains took every opportunity to indicate their displeasure. In the face of such conduct, the *Daily Telegraph* was deeply peeved. "Some four months have elapsed since there was occasion to make reference to the affairs of Marylebone," remarked the diligent "Peterborough," "and I gather that Captain Reid has not taken any steps to secure adoption elsewhere, despite the intimation that there would be no local vacancy. Instead, he is maintaining an interest in his prospective candidature."

Soon Marylebone politics began again to show a certain liveliness. First positive sign was a hand-picked meeting on the 18th March 1932 at Trinity Hall, whereat Sir Rennell Rodd took a noticeably subordinate place to an imported speaker. The importee was none other than Sir Basil Blackett, a director of the Bank of England, to whose very distinguished accomplishments Sir Samuel Scott, the chairman, paid high tribute. The hall, capable of seating 500, was less than a quarter full. The proceedings were therefore distinctly apathetic and observers were not slow to notice that the platform was far below usual strength, none of the C-R contingent being present. But this meeting conveyed no official suggestion that Rodd was stepping down or that banker Blackett was being groomed.

Two days later, though, the 1922 Committee, composed of backbench Conservative M.P.s supporting the National Government, met in the House of Commons and let the cat out of the bag. According to the *Times*, they "asked for information from the Whips as to how they could signify their desire to support the candidature of Sir Basil Blackett if he is invited to stand in St. Marylebone." On April 4 Sir Rennell's letter of resignation was read to a meeting of the Council. This letter, it was noted, carried the date March 21—the day of the 1922 Committee meeting! From the moment these facts came to light the Marylebone battle was again definitely on.

Thereafter the local variety show proceeded much on the lines of the previous programme. Constituting itself once more the voice of the caucus, the *Daily Telegraph* publicised the hopes of the 1922 Committee and continued to pervert the local story. "The nearer we approach the contest the more lamentable it becomes that the party's forces should be divided," moaned the tearful "Peterborough." "Sir Basil Blackett is in every way a desirable representative and any ambitious young politician could surely do better than try to win a seat from a fellow Conservative with a long and distinguished career."

The Council meeting was fixed for April 11 and in the interval the Press, with a few exceptions, kept up a crescendo of adulation on the Blackett drum while the elite drawing-rooms gave vent

to innumerable whispers aimed at the elimination of C-R. "For the last few weeks," said the *Daily Express*, "there has been a hole-and-corner plot to keep Cunningham-Reid out. There have been whisperings and nodding of heads and mutterings, but no one has had the courage to speak out. If there is anything wrong with his character, personality or record it should be stated openly."

Had there been anything really derogatory his traducers would not have been slow to make use of it.

The *Star*, too, despite its regard for Blackett, felt constrained to give space to a protest. "There seems to be a hymn of hate against the Captain," it said, "sung by a small section of Parliamentary people. But the curious thing is that no one has yet been able to advance any reason why he should not be the candidate." It added that, "the Captain has the support of quite a number of local people, even on the Council—as the Council will discover on Monday."

On the night of the selection there was a big gathering, the supporters of Blackett including Lord Hailsham, Mrs Tate (the noble Lord's second cousin), Captain Ian Fraser and Lord Burnham; and the entire anti-C-R faction were present in force. Again, as on the previous occasion, the debate was hot and protracted. The rival nominees stated their case and retired, and after fierce argument the vote was taken. This time it was a straight issue between the two, and the result, though far from overwhelming, was decisive enough. C-R not only retained the support he had won a year before but pulled up his vote to 93, against which Sir Basil registered 86.

Next day, all the newspapers treated the result as a "sensation." "Sir Basil Blackett Rejected," rejoiced the *Daily Express*. "Conservative Candidate Surprise," said the *Daily Herald* mendaciously, having obliquely sponsored Blackett. "Rebels Beat the Caucus," commented the *Star*, while the *Daily Telegraph* spilled many a tear under the caption "Parliament's Loss." Once again it appeared that all was settled. Sir Basil Blackett himself accepted the result as, he said, "a foregone conclusion," a fact he ascribed to C-R's prior work in the borough. Even the *Daily Telegraph*, as its caption intimated, seemed to have bowed to the inevitable and had in fact remarked with resignation that "we may take it now that the matter is a *fait accompli* and that the unedifying spectacle of internecine warfare in this distinguished constituency is at an end."

Moreover, both nominees had agreed before the Council voted to abide by its decision, and Lord Burnham, the Union president, had announced after it that "the candidate having been

chosen, it is our duty to stand unitedly behind him." Marylebone consequently looked upon the matter as settled. Great therefore was the surprise when three days later, on the morning of the day fixed for the endorsement by the general meeting of the Union, the *Morning Post*, *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* splashed a story of "New Developments in Marylebone" and told in big headlines of "objections to the choice of candidate." Once more local Conservatives read another appeal for reference back, this time in the form of a letter, signed by 21 local residents, in which the ghosts of the non-resident members of the Council were revived. Said the letter, which came through the letter-box as well as the Press :

"We, the undersigned Conservative residents of St. Marylebone, urge strongly that at the general meeting the recommendation of the Council in favour of Captain Cunningham-Reid be referred back to the Council for further consideration. The candidate in question is definitely not acceptable to a considerable section of the party, he having secured a majority of only seven votes at a meeting at which 181 members of the Council attended, of whom at least 13 are known to have no vote in the Borough. It is clear that the recommendation cannot fairly be said to represent the decided view of the Marylebone members of the Council. In view of the national emergency and the great need that Marylebone should be represented in Parliament by a member generally acceptable to the constituency as a whole, we ask every member of the Union to attend the meeting and insist on reconsideration of a recommendation which is calculated to create and perpetuate a division in the ranks of Conservatives of St. Marylebone."*

That was a nice way of shifting the onus of schism on to the shoulders of the constitutional majority. According to the signatories the Conservative Union's Council represented "the constituency as a whole." Therefore on their own reckoning C-R was more "acceptable" than Blackett who had only received a minority of the Council votes, some of which no doubt came from members residing outside the constituency. But thin as the letter was, it was neatly timed. It was early enough to catch the local members before the meeting but too late to enable C-R and his circle to reply. A farrago of doubts is always best launched between the protecting ramparts of a narrow interval. C-R's only effective recourse was to wait for the meeting. In

* The signatories were : Lord Derby, John Duncan, Mark Fenwick, A. M. Samuel, Henry Cautley, Ralph Beaumont, Rosamond Ridley, Vera Regensburg, Diana Rosenheim, E. M. Shirley, Lord Midleton, Thomas Moore, P. T. Johnson, Mavis Tate, H. Leveson-Gower, Ann C. Stevens, Eleanor Wyburd, Avis Pfeil, Enid Leveson-Gower, J. Melhuish, Sylvia H. Tracy.

the meantime he sent a reply to the newspapers concerned. This appeared next day as follows :—

“ It is interesting to note that the signatories of the letter consist entirely of those people who have been working on behalf of the candidature of my opponent. In fact the great proportion of them voted in his favour at the Council meeting last Monday. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that my candidature is not acceptable to them. I observe that these few people claim to voice the opinion of the constituency as a whole. There are 72,601 Parliamentary electors in St. Marylebone. Can it be that the signatories are a little biased, or that the wish is father to the thought ? ”

By the time C-R's letter appeared at the breakfast tables the result of the general meeting was known, and the readers could have required no more convincing demonstration that the caucus wish had indeed been paternal to the thought. For the meeting both by vote and voice had been decisive. The *Star* reported it as “ A Rebuff for Tory Headquarters ” and a triumph for local democracy. The *Daily News* talked of “ the rout of the Conservative Central Office.” And rout it was. Despite the vicarious appeals of the central caucus and all the oratory of the local pundits, the reference back was heavily defeated and the vote for C-R was so overwhelming that Lord Burnham, who presided, declared him the winner by “ an easy six to one.” In the din of jubilation there could have been no question as to who came nearer representing “ the opinion of the constituency as a whole.”

But still the local camarilla were reluctant to accept defeat. Two of the Union's most eminent officials, Sir Samuel Scott, the chairman, and Mrs. Adeline Roberts, chairman of the Women's Section, had the ill grace to confront the general meeting with letters of resignation, an event which might have shattered a less democratic organisation, but which in this instance served only to emphasise the animus of the Central Office oligarchy. That C-R could win so decisively in face of it indicated his standing among the rank and file. All this naturally added to the local excitement and became grist for the next day's sensation. “ Storm at Election Meeting,” screamed the *Daily Express*, “ Two Officials Resign.” Even the stately *Daily Telegraph*, which normally preferred labels to headlines, put up a big black splash telling of “ Sensations in Marylebone.” The *Times*, however, stuck serenely to its superior perch with “ Marylebone By-Election. Nominations Next Tuesday.” That gave a week for the caucus to consider the next move.

A week was much more than they required. In fact they had already begun to move, and the resignations were part of this

larger manœuvre. Not all Marylebone was taken by surprise, for the observant had noticed on the morning of the adoption meeting, alongside the letter signed by the 21, an intimation that Sir Basil Blackett "remained at disposal should Marylebone require him." Unlike Lord Burnham, who had been one of C-R's most outspoken opponents, but now loyally accepted the meeting's ruling, Sir Basil, who, before the Council meeting, had pledged himself to abide by the decision, had evidently succumbed to the persuasions of the caucus and lost the battle with his conscience—assuming there was a battle. But in matters of this kind regression is rarely unrationalised and bad faith seldom goes without a salve. The salve was found for Sir Basil in a number of hasty drawing-room meetings and before the end of the week was doing daily service in *Times* and *Telegraph* in the guise this time of a grouse against the endorsement meeting.

Do what they would, win and win again, the Marylebone majority could not satisfy the caucus minority. The oligarchy were determined not to be placated and were clearly out to create trouble. In their letter over the signatures of the 21 they had called on the Union members to attend the meeting in force and their Press had loudly seconded the appeal. For this reason, or more likely because it suited their inclination, the members had done so, no fewer than 1,300 out of the 2,000 turning up at Marylebone Baths for the endorsement. The Baths, however, accommodated no more than 1,000. Consequently some 300 had to remain outside. Had they got in they could not have reversed the decision. Nor would they have wanted to reverse it. From the cries that went up outside most of these 300 were plainly of the same mind as the majority of the 1,000 inside. Could they have affected the vote at all, it would have been to increase the proportion in C-R's favour. Nevertheless, their unavoidable exclusion was seized upon by the caucus journals as an excuse to question the representative character of the meeting. "It is idle to deny that Captain Cunningham-Reid's adoption has proved unacceptable to a considerable number of members of the Union, who for various reasons were unable to record their votes at Marylebone Baths on Thursday," bleated the *Telegraph* mournfully. "When packed to capacity the hall holds no more than 1,000, which meant that a large number of voters were excluded."

The Times offered similar complaint. The autocrats evidently found it difficult to admit that the voice of the 1,000 was more representative than that of a minor clique. It did not occur to the protesting few that they themselves had convened the meeting and were responsible for the size of the hall selected. Moreover, the hall had served the same purpose on previous occasions and there had been no complaints. The caucus were obviously

cribbing at their own handiwork now only because they had lost, and were anxious to manufacture some pretence on which to justify the running of a candidate who had promised to accept the majority verdict. That they were already prepared to put Blackett in the field had been made abundantly clear by their announcement that he was still "at disposal."

There was therefore little surprise when on the eve of nomination day the Press blew up another "sensation" to the effect that Sir Basil "had accepted the invitation of an influential body of Marylebone voters to contest the by-election in support of the National Government." At the same time the formation of the Marylebone Conservative Association was announced, with an executive consisting of Colonel Sir Thomas Moore, Captain Ian Fraser and Mrs. Tate, M.P.s respectively for Ayr Burghs, St. Pancras North and Frome, together with a number of other notables whose signatures had embellished the recent letter. In the interim this group had evidently been extremely busy, for they were at once able to declare that "twenty-six Members of Parliament have already offered to speak for Sir Basil, including Mr. L. S. Amery and Sir Robert Horne." As for Sir Basil, he let it be known that he had "come forward from a sense of national duty in a period of emergency" and felt that he had "a contribution to make to Parliament in view of my special experience in finance and currency, on Indian and Colonial questions and the subject of reparations and international debts."

"WELL AND TRULY WHACKED."

AS a commentary on the methods of domestic power politics the battle for St. Marylebone is illuminating. It reveals the power of the Tory chieftains and shows the lengths to which they will go to attain their ends. The records leave no doubt at all that they were determined to force their nominee on the local electorate, and, despite their constant patter about the "dignity of the borough," had no compunction about the means they employed. Dignity to them evidently meant their own domination, for there had never been any question of decorum so long as the rank and file were content to accept the status of voting cattle and do as they were told. It was a case of any rule being a good rule while it served the ends of those who made it. When it ceased to serve it was abandoned. Wherefore the caucus set up their own organisation and adopted a new set of rules.

In sponsoring Sir Basil Blackett, the new Conservative Association were backing one who was pre-eminently the voice of "big business." Shrewd, pushful and fifty-two, Sir Basil had long been associated with the sacred sanctums of finance. Entering the Treasury in 1904 he was Secretary in 1914 to the Royal Commission on Indian Currency, and from 1917 to 1919 was the British Treasury representative in the United States and Canada. For the next three years he was Controller of Finance at the Treasury, becoming later the Finance Member of the Government of India, and in 1927 Leader of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Returned home, he secured a directorship of the Bank of England, became chairman of many companies and served on a number of official commissions. A director of De Beers, the South African diamond combine, which in the previous 11 years had paid dividends totalling 460 per cent, he was also chairman of Imperial and International Communications, a part of the £50 million Cable and Wireless combine, of which Lord Inverforth was president and Lord Inchcape a director. As one of Threadneedle Street's heavyweights he naturally had a host of seconds, most of whom took an active part in the Marylebone ring. There was Sir Robert Horne, eminent Cabinetee from Lloyd's Bank, Viscount Wolmer, son of another Bank director, Herbert Williams of the Empire Industries Association, and Sir Austen Chamberlain of the Greater London electricity combine. There were also among his supporters many M.P.s connected with the Stock Exchange.

With this impressive record and support, Sir Basil was boosted by the caucus as exactly the man to rescue the country from the financial typhoon in which it was just then floundering. Having gone off gold and defaulted on the American debt, the country was certainly in need of a financial messiah, for the Baldwin-MacDonald National combination had, despite their doctor's mandate, succeeded only in getting further into the mire. But whether Sir Basil could have done any better was very much open to doubt. It is reasonable to assume that as a Bank of England director so closely connected with the Treasury he was co-responsible for the emergency through which he now hoped to push his way into Parliament. Besides, if Sir Basil's only desire was to help the country out of its difficulties he was already possessed of more opportunities than any ordinary Member of Parliament. He had a direct say in the affairs of the Bank and consequently in the policy of the Treasury which, for practical purposes, was the same as having a direct say in the decisions of the Cabinet. What further influence could he acquire by attaching his talents to the multiple cypherage of the Commons, asked local Conservatives. And if, incidentally, the parlous state of Britain could only be relieved by the majestic presence of Blakett in the Commons why, they wondered, was a seat not found for him at the time of the General Election six months previously? Last but not least, what time had a man of such august occupations to give to the humble requirements of Marylebone?

Once the nominations had been handed in the fur began to fly. It was a most curious contest, for whichever man won the result would be the same as far as national policy was concerned. Both were Conservatives and both supported the National Government.

Inevitably, all the big parliamentary guns barked in support of the caucus. Cabinetees and ex-Cabinetees and would-be Cabinetees flooded into the borough. Even the Liberal Association contributed its mead of praise to Sir Basil, and all but the Beaverbrook journals came down heavily on his side.

Against this galaxy of Central Office apologists, C-R's supporters played up his war record, which was at least as distinguished as this opponent's achievements in the sphere of finance. So the opposition added C-R's D.F.C. to their whispering programme, complaining that it was unfair to use such a distinction against a man who had seen no active service!

Accompanied by all the usual extravagances of an internecine conflict, the fight engendered some of the liveliest meetings in the borough's history. The workers of the borough were not impressed by the influx of political heavyweights. Sir Austen

Chamberlain, Sir Robert Horne and the rest were regarded as the minions of authority introduced to "down an ex-Serviceman" according to one remonstrant in the local press. Another said it "wasn't cricket," a sporting idiom which reminds that Marylebone includes Lord's Cricket Ground as well as the Waxworks, Selfridge's and the Zoo.

So sharp was the feeling engendered by the slick manoeuvres of the Blackett faction, that families were frequently divided in their allegiance, Hilton Philipson, for instance, a former Liberal M.P. for Berwick, supporting C-R, while his actress wife, Mabel Russell, who had succeeded him at Berwick as a Conservative, backed Blackett. Subtle attempts were also made to divide other influential families, including C-R's. The caucus even solicited the support of his father-in-law, Colonel Ashley, afterwards Lord Mount Temple, who, however, declined to play ball with the City. Then into Blackett's team of canvassers suddenly stepped Betty Baldwin, the Conservative leader's daughter. Betty withdrew from the doorsteps after a couple of days, but her temporary intrusion was both symptomatic of Downing Street's desires and productive of the campaign's most outstanding quiz.

Why had the Union candidate not been blessed with a Baldwin letter, asked the Blackettters. The question was appropriate enough, for it was the Baldwin practice at that time to assist Tory by-election candidates with a coupon on behalf of the National Government. C-R had received no such official ratification. The omission had been well and duly noted by the Blackett canvassers, but now, encouraged by Betty's appearance, they put the question aloud, Blackett himself presuming sufficiently on the hint to issue a challenge declaring himself ready to withdraw if C-R sought and received the Baldwin benediction. This put C-R in a dilemma, for if he declined to solicit the panjandrum's aid he was leaving his Tory loyalty open to doubt. On the other hand, to ask and be refused might be tantamount to making his opponent a gift of the Baldwin blessing. Nevertheless he decided to ask, although he must have known that with all the big Tory noises of the Cabinet trumpeting on the Blackett band-waggon, Baldwin could hardly hold out a helping hand to Blackett's opponent, even had he been inclined that way. Then for twenty-four anxious hours the partisans waited, while Baldwin maintained a studied silence—which was scarcely a penance for one accustomed to sealing his lips in public.

Eventually Blackett got a note direct from Baldwin informing him that he had turned down C-R's request and had "decided in view of all the circumstances not to intervene in the Marylebone election." C-R received a similar letter, but for some

strange reason it did not arrive until many hours after Sir Basil had been able to announce the contents of his. Marylebonians interpreted the disparity as it was no doubt intended to be interpreted. Blackett made the most of it, declaring that as far as the Central Office was concerned there was no official candidate.

Blackett's astute tactic had thus achieved something near the desired result. If it had not earned him the Baldwin benediction it had at least evoked a public assurance that C-R was not getting it, which was the next best thing. Accepting the situation as a complete confirmation of the charges he had so frequently made against the party oldsters, C-R responded with a peculiarly apt excerpt from the Baldwin orations. This was culled from a recent speech to the National Union of Conservative Associations, wherein the venerable Stanley said: "I can only advise, I cannot compel, but I do beg the constituencies of this country to look round the army of first rate young men now tried in the House and secure them as your candidates for seats that they may have a reasonable hope of winning, and seats, which won, they will be able to keep. The importance of that is really beyond anything I can express."

Had those words been uttered with Marylebone and C-R in mind they could hardly have been more apt. Broadcast by leaflet over the borough in the last few hours before the poll they helped to redress the balance.

Blackett's meetings were stormy. His audiences seethed with indignation and pandemonium broke loose as the hecklers exposed stage by stage the secretive role of the party highups and the underhand support accorded the local caucus in their efforts to renew their grip on the Peerage Division. Conservative headquarters had pressed the whole of their formidable canvassing corps into service in support of Blackett, with the result that every voter had been canvassed twice on his behalf, whereas C-R's small band of voluntary workers had only been able to canvass half the constituency once. On the night of the poll the counting-room of the Town Hall was like a casino. Lines of checkers sat round green baize tables, covered with low diffused lighting, and anxious partisans stood restlessly around. As the piles of ballot papers were stacked up, now one and now the other leading, excitement rose to fever pitch. When at length from the balcony of the town hall C-R was declared the winner by 11,677 votes to 10,664 a tumult of cheering arose from among the surging crowds below. In face of the opposition's greatly superior forces C-R had scored a big victory and, as the *Star* had it, "the Tory machine was well and truly whacked."

Thus was the dictatorship of the caucus rejected in the constituency. C-R was the symbol of the revolt. He was to revolt

later against the dictatorship of the caucus in Parliament, and that is the significance of his political career. But for the moment his heresy had only begun. To his original sin of accepting the candidature he had now added the crime of capturing the local majority against all the designs of the caucus. Conservative Central Office, robbed of a safe seat, had suffered a sharp blow to its prestige and a severe curtailment of its patronage. It would be strange indeed if the victor were not henceforth to find plenty of Tory booby-traps strewn in his way.

WHO STRIKES THE POPE, DIES

THE shattering blow which the victor of Marylebone had dealt the Tory hierarchy reverberated through the sanctums of Whitehall and the corridors of Westminster. There was little they could do about it, but resentment burned in the breasts of the Old Gang. It was an achievement which even Winston Churchill had failed to pull off in similar circumstances in the borough of Westminster some years earlier. But now, in the bluest of blue boroughs, a rebel had arisen and smitten the Gods of Toryism to the chine.

An old proverb says "Who strikes the Pope, dies." On this reckoning, C-R had signed his political death warrant. As he walked between his reluctant sponsors, David Margesson, Chief Tory Whip, and another, from bar to table, the crowd on the Government benches sat rigid and still, their eyes wandering about the rafters over the opposite gallery. The silence was oppressive. Such unison of dumb reproach could not have been spontaneous. As the *Sunday Express* remarked: "Make no mistake, the reception was organised. It was arranged beforehand that no one should cheer. A petty proceeding!" Only the opposition cheered, breaking the frosty atmosphere with ironic promptings to the others to welcome their warrior home.

Their boorish display of chagrin notwithstanding, the Tory pundits quickly noddled the newcomer and presented him with the Party whip. They thought it better not to impair the party strength by following too closely the logic of their public display. But with his party loyalties seriously compromised C-R received no invitation to become again a PPS. In this he was probably fortunate, for his freedom from Ministerial leading-strings allowed him more scope to pursue his parliamentary interests in his own way. And he pursued them with zest and vigour, both inside and outside the House. Time and again during the next few months he put the Party leaders under a withering fire. Four election campaigns had sharpened his wits, developed a bold, persuasive, provocative and humorous speaker. The composition of his speeches was as a rule good, often betraying the expenditure of much time and effort. His delivery varied, his effectiveness running in inverse proportion to the copiousness of his notes. He was at his best when using no notes at all. Thriving on interruptions, the hotter the heckling the more composed he seemed to get. He was also not above a bit of heckling himself. Once in Hyde Park he was questioning an orator who in an attempt to avoid any more interruptions pulled

the old gag of saying, "Come up on this platform and say what you have got to say or keep your mouth shut!" C-R obliged and spoke with his arms as much as with his mouth for over a quarter of an hour until the infuriated orator pulled him down. But the immense crowd that had gathered by then yelled for him to return, which he triumphantly did. It is not surprising that his local meetings were always packed and that he earned big notice as a star turn in other parts of the country.

Owing nothing to the official caucus he owned to no party subordination either. At a constituency meeting at the end of the year, he openly repudiated any subservience to the Whips. At the same time he made clear his impatience with the ante-deluvian methods of conducting parliamentary business. The speech, a satire on the Commons, was typical of his breezy pungent style. To talk of taking a seat in the Commons was a misnomer, said C-R, for there were not enough seats to go round. It was the only legislative assembly he knew where though a member might not upset whoever was speaking by whistling or spitting he might carry on as loud a conversation as he liked with his neighbour. The term "Mr. Speaker" was an odd one, for he was the only Member who did not make speeches. The antiquated method of recording divisions was a ridiculous waste of time, sometimes taking as much as three hours a day. Parliamentary procedure was badly in need of reform. Before M.P.s started putting the country to rights they would do well to put their own House in order. For his part, he intended to press for reform at the first opportunity, and keep pressing. Unlike two-thirds of the Members who for various reasons were tied to the Whips, he was in a position to conduct his own business and vote as his conscience dictated.

At this time, too, C-R was agitating for reform of the League of Nations, which he called "an institution which, under its present rules, allows the big powers to vote for a practical scheme of world peace, but equally allows Guatemala or some other minor State to vote against it and wreck the whole programme." Surveying the League's procedure and its consequences, he predicted that the maze of treaties then being fostered "might in certain circumstances commit us to fight with the Poles against the Germans." At another time, criticising the weakness of the Sanctions clause, he remarked that "fifty-seven nations have given the League a blank cheque and fifty-seven governments are wondering what the bank manager will do if it is ever presented." Just what happened to the bank and the nations is now a matter of history, and it is to C-R's credit that he was among the first to warn the Government of the risk it was running in declining to make adequate preparations for defence on the one hand and, on the other, refusing to promote the constitutional

changes necessary to make the League a reliable instrument for the preservation of peace.

In this connection he continued, as Member for Marylebone, to emphasise the need for an efficient Air Force with all the frequency and energy to which the House had become accustomed when he represented Warrington. It was sheer professional bigotry, he said, during the Air Estimates debate in March, 1933, to regard the Army as an effective instrument of defence in the absence of a greatly expanded air arm. "In some statistics I came across the other day," he said, hanging on to a lapel as was his manner in the House, "the Germans claim to have dropped 300 tons of bombs on this country during the war, and they ought to know. I should not be surprised if, in the event of any future air attack, that number of bombs could be dropped on London in twelve hours." That speech was delivered just at the time Hitler was consolidating his power after the burning of the Reichstag. Seven years later the Luftwaffe dropped 400 tons on London in one night. And the military and political brass-hats were still at the stage where they thought night attacks could be stopped by searchlights and peashooters! Perhaps Lord Croft received more than his fair share of odium when he canvassed arming the Local Defence Volunteers with pikes!

C-R's range of activity during these years both in the constituency and in the Commons was such as many another Member might have emulated. There was not a function in the borough which did not demand and nearly always receive his attention, and no major issue in Parliament that did not excite his active interest. Except for such social events as fell during the vacations, he was rarely seen in the Mayfair whirl and it was left to Mrs. C-R—now, since the ennobling of her father, known as the Hon. Mrs. C-R—to maintain their joint ascendency in the social sphere. Said Councillor Stanley Davis at a local meeting: "Captain Cunningham-Reid is the best M.P. we ever had," an opinion echoed throughout the constituency. "Captain Cunningham-Reid's assiduity in the Commons has its equivalent in his assiduity in his constituency," asserted the *Marylebone Record*. "Wherever his interest or presence is wanted as the representative of the Borough, there he is, often with the Hon. Mrs. Cunningham-Reid, aiding and encouraging everything for the good of St. Marylebone." So solid was the ground on which the journal based its approval—and it was not always uncritical—that on the second anniversary of C-R's return to the Commons it published a conspectus of his activities, remarking "how the Captain has carried out to the letter all the promises made when he came before the electors and has proved himself amply deserving of their trust."

Here are the items as listed by the *Record* :

Speeches and Questions

Air Defence	European Situation
Air Estimates (2)	Foreign Affairs (Lord Privy Seal's Mission)
Army Estimates	Immigration
Austrian Loan	Imperial Defence
Disarmament	High Sheriffs (Expenditure and Allowances)
Air Pilots' Powers	House of Commons Procedure
Ancient Statutes	Hyde Park Railings
Anglo-French Commercial Relations	Ideal Homes Exhibition (International Refrigerator Co.)
Anti-Aircraft Defence School	Imperial Airways (Liner Disaster)
Australia (British Investors)	Infectious Diseases (Mosquitos)
Austrian Situation	Landing of Airplanes (New Forest)
Baltic Sea (Admiralty Charts)	Libel Action (Supreme Court Rules)
Biological Research	London Omnibus Service
British Army (Royal Artillery Officers)	Mandated Territories (Pacific)
British Coal Imports, Germany (Payments)	Married Quarters (St. John's Wood)
British Colonies (United States Currency)	Master Pilots' Licences
Broadcasting (International Affairs)	Motor Car Headlights
Cinematograph Act (Prosecution, Ramsgate)	New Hebrides (Exchange Rates)
Civil Aviation	Officers' Medical Inspection
Civil Disturbances (Armed Forces)	Officers' Pay (Telegraphic Transmission)
Collisions at Sea (Criminal Jurisdiction)	Police (Casts and Moulds)
Court Martial of Admiral Sir E. Troubridge	Police Station, Crawford Place
Cyprus	Polish and Lithuanian Frontier
Debts (Committee's Report)	Protection of Lapwings Act
Defamation and Libel	Regent's Park (Open Air Theatre)
Diseases of Fish	Registration (Transfer of Functions)
Education (Injured Scholars)	River Crane (Pollution)
Empire Marketing Board (2)	Royal Hospital School Buildings, Greenwich
Employment Exchanges	Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia Treaty
Ethiopia (Agreement)	Russia (Broadcast Propaganda)
Fiji (Currency)	Savings Banks (Travellers' Warrants)
Fires in Passenger Liners	Seychelles
Plants in Regent's Park	Shipping (International Conventions)
Footways (Cyclists)	Theatres Act (University Censorship)
Foreign Countries (Special Navigation Agreement)	Traffic Lights, Oxford Street
Franchise (Limited Companies)	Trinidad (Water Supply)
Fuel for the Navy	Variation of the St. Germain Treaty
Gold Bonds	West Indies Close Union Commission
	World Economic Conference

Committees

Standing Committee "A"	British Legion Committee
Air Committee	Foreign Affairs Committee
Hungary Committee	London Members Committee

Thus tersely listed the subjects convey little more than the scope of the Marylebone Member's interest. But most of his questions and speeches were to the point, and some of them sought information the Government was not anxious to give or suggested policies it did not want to pursue. In asking for the number of prosecutions brought under ancient statutes, for

instance, he was calling attention to certain restrictive measures carried forward from the days of Elizabeth and before. His queries on the Cinematograph Act, Libel Actions and the Theatre Act were aimed at exposing the many aspects of law and censorship which violate the right of free speech. He raised the question of Admiral Troubridge's Court Martial in order to remove the stigma under which the Admiral's family believed they had suffered since 1914.* Another matter of similar limited import was that concerning children injured, one fatally, by splintered seats at a school in C-R's own constituency.

No question seemed too big or too parochial to engage his interest. He was the first to try to impress upon the Government the need for defending aerodromes in the event of war, a contingency which, he declared in numerous speeches, was not so "unthinkable"—to use Ramsay MacDonald's word—as most people appeared to believe. That is why he strove so persistently to persuade the Government to "avoid getting caught between two half policies." Repeatedly he urged the imperative necessity of either promoting practical and universal disarmament through the League or of keeping abreast of the needs of defence. "Armaments, like peace," he said, extending Maxim Litvinov's phrase, "are indivisible. You must promote universal disarmament or prepare for war. If you play at both you will get only war." How the country was led to near-collapse between two stools is now past the need of emphasis.

Most of the credit granted to the few who at that time looked ahead with an eye on realities has gone to Winston Churchill. But C-R was much earlier on the alert. Winston came prominently into the picture only in February 1934, when he was bracketed with C-R in the Press reports of a debate on the state of Britain's defences. Of the two C-R was the more persistent, but his political pronouncements were not "news" as were those of the Marlborough word-weaver. Only after a perusal of the official parliamentary reports do C-R's practical contributions to the Air Estimate debates stand out in perspective as among the most constructive speeches of the decade. "Rearm in support of the Covenant or revise the Treaties" was the substance of his contentions long before Hitler restored conscription and remilitarised the Rhineland. It is doubtful whether any other M.P. can show a more consistently active and far-seeing record.

* Admiral Troubridge was in command of a Mediterranean Cruiser Squadron in August 1914 when the German warships Goeben and Breslau escaped into Turkish waters. In view of his instructions not to engage an enemy force superior to his own the Court directed that he be "honourably acquitted." C-R asked that the proceedings of the court martial be published in fairness to the Admiral's relatives.

In spite of all this the caucus were immovably resolved against conviction or placation, as was clearly revealed by their continued maintenance of the rival Association which, however, despite their utmost efforts to increase its membership, assumed more and more the character of a hole-and-corner rump. Lacking any new sin on the part of the Member on which to base additional complaint they lay low, nursing only what remained of the ancient and exploded charges and venting their spleen by giving polish and twist to the former innuendoes. Of course they muttered among themselves at C-R's increasing addition to prodding the Westminster authorities, but since his conduct was so manifestly pleasing to the great mass of his constituents they did not mutter aloud.

Nor did C-R at this time give them much opportunity to doubt his allegiance to Tory principles. Though less frequently than formerly, he still regaled the credulous multitude with ladles of anti-Socialist swill, and after a visit to Russia gave vent to all the footling falsities with which the world had then become familiar, and which it has since so conveniently forgotten. This hurried trip round Leningrad and Moscow was part of a tour which C-R and his wife undertook during the summer vacation of 1933, when the Russians had just begun their second Five Year Plan. The couple joined their 10-ton yacht "Lizard" at Kiel and visited all the Scandinavian and Baltic capitals, ending up by a motor trip through Germany and the Balkan States accompanied by two friends, the Hon. Eileen Brougham and C-R's cousin, Fordham Flower, son of the Sir Archibald Flower famed for his munificence in the cause of Shakespeare, and for the brewing of pale ales at Stratford-on-Avon.

During their stay in Copenhagen, reported Mrs. C-R on their return, they were invited by the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden to visit them at their summer residence at Solfieio, almost opposite Copenhagen on the Swedish coast. The C-Rs found the port beflagged with Union Jacks and were received by the Burgomaster. The occasion must have been reminiscent of the honeymoon tour. It showed that the C-Rs were still a vogue among the International Set, but the Press now made little of it. Incidentally, the official send-off by Solfieio's Burgomaster and Corporation ended somewhat ignominiously, the engines of the C-Rs' small cabin cruiser refusing to function for some time.

From the royal residence at Solfieio to the fierce constructive confusion of Russia was rather a distant step. C-R was greatly struck by the magnitude of the building work going on in the Soviet capital. Nevertheless his impressions were much on a par with those of previous well-to-do investigators, and his reports were not calculated to make Marylebonians take up

residence in Moscow. In his prattling declamations against the Soviet he was again in the gladsome company of Lord Beaverbrook, not to mention Winston Churchill, and if he has since had to eat his words he has not had to strain his digestion near as much as some other participants in the feast.

It may be said for C-R, moreover, as for some of the others, that they were by social and academic training quite unfitted to understand what Stalin and his colleagues were trying to achieve. Much less were they able to perceive the future Soviet construction in the creative chaos of that time. A man living near the pinnacle of British society on some £70,000 a year, as C-R was, might be expected to take more stock of Moscow's plugless baths than of the deep social impulse which inspired the Russians to forego shoes and even shirts to ensure the success of the Five Year plans. Nor could he in the dim dawn of his political awakening measure or even conceive the world significance of Moscow's continental-scale planning. Had he and others done so, Britain might be less short of shoes and shirts to-day. He knows now, as do some of his erstwhile associates. As against most of these he probably counts himself fortunate, for though he misread Stalin's blue-prints he never hailed Hitler's dementia or applauded Mussolini's bombast.*

* On the other hand Sir Thomas Moore, M.P. for Ayr Burghs, one of C-R's most violent critics, pleading to "give Hitler a chance," once declared, "I am satisfied that Hitler is absolutely honest and sincere," and when describing a Fascist meeting at the Albert Hall he asked rhetorically, "What is there in a black shirt which gives apparent dignity and intelligence to its wearers?" going on, incidentally, to say, "Surely there cannot be any fundamental difference of outlook between the Blackshirts and their parents the Conservatives!"

CHAPTER XIV.

UNREPENTANT.

AT this stage in his career the Member for Marylebone, though he had gravely offended the Conservative high-ups, might still have expiated his original sin. He had only to conform to the requirements of the party game to have again secured the approval of those in authority. Despite his parliamentary preoccupations he was still a factor on the Mayfair merry-go-round and still closely connected with the highest circles. Yet however much he may have been moved by a desire to heal the split in his constituency he declined to pander to the parliamentary Whips. Instead he continued to harry the high-ups and seemed to look for trouble. When talk of a forthcoming election seized political circles in 1934 he advanced beyond his usual jabbing attacks to a frontal assault on the concept of "Collective Cabinet Responsibility," an idea and a usage enshrined among the most sacred of parliamentary holies from Victoria's earliest years.

Having claimed the right before his constituents to be a "candid critic" of the Government, and having on many occasions implemented the claim in the House, he had perforce run up against the outraged authority of the Party Whips and felt himself compelled to examine and then question the theory on which the authority was founded. One of the many articles he wrote at that time appeared in the *Daily Mirror* and constitutes one of the best brief criticisms of the dangerous "collectivity" doctrine published before or since.* In short, this doctrine means that a vote of censure cannot be passed on an inefficient Minister without it being taken as a censure on the Government as a whole. Thus, duds often cannot be shifted and remain to do more harm. Invented by political cynics when reaction was firmly poised in the Westminster saddle, the doctrine has done much to damage popular faith in parliamentary institutions. Like the phrase "not in the public interest," it is a convenient screen for numerous sins and is observed most by incompetent Ministers whom it justifies least. Whatever the degree of team-spirit it suggests in theory, in practice it has become a refuge for mediocrity. On the plea that the members of a Cabinet must hang together lest each hang separately, a Prime Minister can often enforce a confidence that is quite unmerited by his performance or his ability. The theory thus

* *Daily Mirror*, February 12, 1934. See Appendix Page 255.

protects him against criticism by other Ministers acquainted with the facts, and encourages him to select his colleagues for their worst qualities—so that Cabinets tend to be headed by small men supported by men of lower intellectual stature and less moral courage than themselves. Which may explain the high favour in which the doctrine has been held in Downing Street during the last twenty years.

In the same article C-R also betrayed a hint of the general divergence between his own outlook and that of the Government he had been elected to support. "There is little doubt," he complained, "that all Governments, dressed in a little brief authority, tend to demonstrate their power first and foremost to their own followers." This was done, he explained, by "that remarkable provision of our constitution which gives the Prime Minister the right to dissolve parliament at any time and so fine disobedient followers £1,000 each for election expenses, with or without the loss of their seats." This is a procedure closely connected with the practice of "collective Cabinet responsibility" and enables the Prime Minister, by threatening a vote of confidence, to browbeat ordinary M.P.s as well as Cabinet Ministers. C-R was to state his objections to the whole conception more forcibly later. At the moment he was but bristling under the irksomeness of the party harness, gradually groping his way towards that reconciliation of thought and action which should be the aim of every M.P. and which C-R achieved by going through the painful process of asserting his right to parliamentary independence.

A few months later at the annual meeting of the local Conservative Union he reaffirmed his role as a "candid critic," saying he often "felt distressed by the odd lapses of judgment of Government and party leaders and the evidence of the degree to which the feeling of the man in the street is unknown to them." Citing as "two glaring examples" the Incitement to Disaffection Bill and the Betting and Lotteries Bill, he declared "most people decline to regard either of these as imperative to the welfare of the country, and every M.P. below Cabinet rank knows they are detested by the electorate. Yet they are forced upon us from above, and the unhappy back-bencher is faced with the choice of voting against the Government or of incurring the wrath of his constituents." Loud applause indicated that both Bills were less favoured in Marylebone than in Westminster. He also came down severely on the composition of Royal Commissions which, he said, "are well embellished with big names, sometimes with Archbishops and the like, but are amazingly unrepresentative of the ordinary people who are most affected by the resultant legislation." He made no complaint against the experts "who are all right in their way," but thought that

"no reason why we should overlook the importance of the multitude who like to place a bob on the 3.30."

Lest it be thought C-R's increasing criticism was merely destructive, it should be remarked that most of his parliamentary queries had constructive purpose, as did all his major contributions to debates. In 1935 he added to his adumbrations of the future a proposal for conducting parliamentary and municipal elections by post as well as by the ballot box, a method calculated to help electors who, either because they were invalids or because they lived far from the polling-booth, were virtually disfranchised. At that time the backwoodsmen jeered, but M.P.s have since taken the proposal so seriously that at future general elections members of the Forces, merchant seamen and war workers overseas will vote by post. It may not be long before every elector can express his preference by the same means. As C-R remarked when pioneering the proposal: "The Socialists always urge the need for better representation and the Conservatives are forever lamenting a supposed apathy, so why not remove every possible obstacle now standing in the way of the full exercise of the franchise?" Why not, indeed!

Throughout the three years following his return to the Commons in 1932, C-R's immense exertions in St. Marylebone won enthusiastic approval from all save the caucus. They sneered that he never went near the Squares and Terraces. A clue to where he did go was revealed in a short paragraph in the *Marylebone Mercury*. "Captain Cunningham-Reid is frequently to be seen walking round the poorer quarters of Marylebone," said the *Mercury*. "It is gratifying to have a Member who is going out of his way to come into contact with those of his constituents who are least able to help themselves." In those crisis years many hard-hit constituents certainly needed help. Still wrapped in the economic confusions of Adam Smith, C-R had little to offer by way of a political programme, but his local incursions into the back streets inspired him to sufficient sympathy to set him on the way to a better understanding of the unemployment problem. At least he learned enough to reject the ancient illusion—never more than a salve for guilty consciences and an excuse for official inaction—that unemployment was the individual fault of the unemployed. Convinced, he did not hesitate to declare his conversion, and at the opening of a local Occupational and Social Centre publicly dissociated himself from the age-old assumption of his party. "It has struck me," he said, "how the psychology of unemployment has changed during the last few years. I well remember before the war that to be unemployed was to some extent considered to be a slur on the individual. It was thought he was unable to get work because he was not worth employing. To-day that has been changed.

There are millions of unemployed who can no more help being unemployed than can unfortunate people living in the vicinity of a volcano help being affected by its eruption. The eruption in our midst is the world crisis, and this is the cause of unemployment all over the world." Unfortunately the confession was followed by the usual anti-climax. He thought the tide was turning. It was not a very profound thought.

His activities at this time composed a veritable pot-pourri. He sponsored in Parliament the case of some 84,000 organised nurses against what they considered the injustice of the Nurses' Registration Act Amendment Bill. He fostered a "Spend for Employment" campaign among the rich as a modest though little-availing scheme to help the poor. He promoted improvements in the local parks. He patronised both charity and art by paying 700 guineas for a blank canvas to be painted on by Sir John Lavery at a League of Mercy show, and afforded influential support to Sydney Carroll and the cause of the stage when the Open-Air Theatre was started in Regent's Park. "What cyclorama can be compared with the vault of heaven—and what limelight is not mocked by a sunbeam," he wrote in a message* for the programme of the opening performance. Nice sentiments and fit language for a prelude to *Twelfth Night* by a Governor of the Stratford Memorial Theatre.

In the light of this versatile record, it is not surprising that C-R's stock stood high in his constituency when the 1935 election came along. But nothing could assuage the wrath of the camarilla. Though many of its members had reverted to the original fold the rival organisation was still maintained, its sole object being to put up another candidate. When the election came, however, C-R's enemies thought better of it and had to sit back and watch him beat his Labour opponent by 31,184 votes to 8,008—London's second largest majority.

It was a warm and virile campaign, a conflict in which C-R enhanced his reputation for effective repartee. To a Liberal heckler who inquired about the Lloyd George programme he cracked back: "Lloyd George demands a new deal, but those who have played with him before always begin by demanding a new pack!" The enthusiasm throughout the campaign was as tremendous as the result was decisive. A feature of the contest was the disparity between the expenses of the two candidates. The campaign cost C-R £1,111 against his opponent's £190. Thus is politics played in a great democracy.

* See Appendix Page 257.

"The trouble," said Doctor Elizabeth Jacobs, the able but defeated Labour candidate, after the poll, "is that Marylebone workers will vote Conservative." Actually, the Marylebone Labourites had made the fundamental mistake of putting up a woman against a good-looking man, and that, in a constituency dominated by women, was fatal. As was remarked by some irate notability in suffragette days: "Give votes to women? Bah! They'd only vote for the most attractive man!" When Marylebone had confirmed the prediction C-R again did the unusual thing. The majority of candidates, after kissing the babies up to the eve of the poll, rush home, gargle, and forget all about them. Not so the Member for Marylebone. As his constituents went off early to work next morning they were agreeably surprised to see how posters had sprung up like mushrooms all over the borough—"CUNNINGHAM-REID THANKS YOU!" He had evidently had printers and bill-posters working all night, and Marylebonians appreciated the gesture.

When Francis Place and his associates led the agitation for electoral reform more than a century ago, they little thought the pocket boroughs would be superseded by pocket parties dominated nationally and locally by rich men or richer bodies. Anyone who takes the trouble to check the amount of money spent on political campaigning over the past century will probably find that the average cost has increased with every extension of the franchise, despite the large sums formerly paid for some of the rotten boroughs. Seats which absorbed a penny a vote in mid-Victorian days now cost about eight times as much to win and maintain, and the number of voters has been enormously increased.

Not only critics of the electoral system but M.P.s themselves have frequently made strong protest against the high cost of representation. The statutory limit which lays down a maximum of 5d. per head in boroughs and 6d. in counties may curb the generosity of wealthy candidates during the election campaign, but an astute M.P. is always campaigning by one means or another, and the less his esteem as a parliamentarian the more must he spend to transmute his social standing into political influence in the intervals between elections. Even the active Member of good parliamentary repute is often compelled to undertake prodigal expenditure where the competition for the candidature is acute. For in addition to the demands of the party organisation there are the calls of charity, and many other donations to causes good and bad in the constituency. These additions often add up to double or treble the direct election costs and have sometimes reached such insupportable propor-

tions as to drive Members into another constituency or into retirement, financially embarrassed and spiritually depressed.*

Another potent factor undermining the expectations reared on the broadened franchise has been the immense growth of the titular hierarchy. Side by side with every franchise extension there has taken place a tremendous piling up of the social pyramid. This is a feature that the popular exponents of constitutional development have allowed to pass unnoticed. In their enthusiastic descriptions of the "broadening basis of British democracy" the history books are blind to the comparatively greater diffusion of honours and the ideological corruption effected through the social influence of titles. The effect is seen in every phase of the national life, and nowhere more than in the newspapers. The aura of tradition, respectability, and presumed importance that surrounds Lord Skinem imparts to his views a fashion and currency with which the utterances of plain John Smith can rarely hope to compete. Likewise, Lady Rollup is pictured and publicised as though her opinions compose the essence of wisdom, and the whole scale of aristocratic values is so perpetually drilled into the multitude that their minds tend to become sidetracked from notions more in keeping with their interests.†

Though much a part of the pyramid and long accustomed to the advantages prevalent at the top, C-R appears to have been by no means unaware of its imperfections. His continued contact with the under-privileged section of his constituents—many of whom must have subjected his party shibboleths to shattering inspection—seems to have led him more and more to condemn its implications. He now displayed a greater consciousness of urgent social needs. Following a disastrous fire in the borough he forced a departmental inquiry into the emergency

* Mrs. Mavis Tate was reported in April 1939 as saying she would not contest Frome again, because she could not stand the strain of election and local party subsidies. The 1935 election cost her £1,153 and she was also handing over her parliamentary salary of £400 to the local association. On top of that she had to maintain a house in the district, which with charity and various donations, she said, ran up to another £500 a year. In addition she had to maintain herself as M.P. The total cost must even at that time have run up to well over £3,000 a year. With income tax at present rates it requires an income of at least £10,000 a year to support a seat of this kind.

† Peers, baronets and knights in 1830 totalled 1,465; in 1887 the number was 2,190; in 1901, 2,768; in 1917, 4,240; in 1937, 6,265; The population in the same years, in round figures, stood at 24, 36, 42, 43 and 46 millions. Thus, while the population doubled the titles increased over four times. The effect has been to increase the aristocratic pressure on the mind of the people, for against one titled personage to every 16,382 of the population in 1830, there was in 1937 one for every 6,265. And these figures include only substantive titles. If courtesy titles be included the total to-day numbers nearly 11,000—which is roughly one to every 4,182 of the population.

arrangements of the telephone service. He also championed the equal rights of women in the Contributory Pensions Bill, called for a clean-up of the stale-tinned-goods racket, urged the need for wholesome milk, and interested himself in prison reform. Locally he lent a hand in welfare work and the social services and gave a ready ear to the requirements of his constituents, great and small.

His diligence in this connection once brought him into conflict with the big noises of the Borough Council, which had laid down a traffic regulation against which a number of traders protested. At their request C-R introduced a deputation to the Ministry of Transport, which evoked protest from the Aldermen and Councillors. At the local Chamber of Commerce he explained his attitude. "If the Borough Council are anxious to put forward a scheme with which I am not in agreement," he said, "I will definitely not support them, and the same applies to any group of constituents. If, on the other hand, any group wants to make any application or has any grievance it is my duty to present them in the proper quarter whether I agree with them or not. That seems to me the only proper procedure for a Member of Parliament."

Eschewing the still clamant demands of the social round, C-R remained an exemplary Member. Regular in the House, and resolute in attention to local problems, he was the subject of glowing tribute by electors and organisations in the year following his second election. Unable to find substantial fault, the Tory highups, unplaced, grit their teeth and awaited opportunity. It came rather sooner than they expected and in a manner which allowed them, as most respectable gentlemen, to make the most of it.

THE C-Rs GO TO COURT.

AT the end of 1936 the C-Rs parted. How the tongues of Mayfair wagged ! Here was a matrimonial mallet where-with to whack the wayward politician. And how the caucus seized it ! What lay behind the rift the distant observer can only guess.

It was a situation in which political misanthropy could not forbear to strut forth garbed in all the finery of moral righteousness, and it may easily be imagined how the speculative details gathered spice in the rectitude of leisured drawing-rooms. With hate lending venom to the fancy, fiction soon defaced the facts and while the whispers rose and made their rounds the lawyers put in overtime. Since where there is wealth the bonds of wed-lock are often sealed by its covenants, the breach gave rise to financial differences. Having bestowed parliamentary prestige on the joint menage and contributed towards its social eminence, C-R, now on his own and out of touch with his earlier business connections, had to give a thought to the contracts that concerned his future. Mrs. C-R on the other hand, wanted to revoke the arrangements. This was the sequel to that gorgeous dream-time beside the Mediterranean a decade before. The sequel also had a sequel, and in January 1938 C-R, apparently unable to settle matters privately, invoked the aid of the law.

At last the rebel was where the caucus wanted him. At least they were not displeased to see him in court. But it was not the kind of court familiar to some other rebels. No portly policeman hovered over the principals and no savage penalty pended on the result. Mayfair and Belgravia were agog with excitement. The case provided an unscheduled thrill in the social calendar. Wrapped in their winter embellishments, women besieged the court, and the gossip men sharpened their pencils in readiness for drama. In the background the caucus males nudged and nodded in smug anticipation of delight. If C-R, politically recreant and now, as they hoped, socially reviled, could not be bounced or voted out of his coveted seat he was likely to be bankrupted out. That indeed was the prospect before Marylebone's M.P. if he failed in his action.

Even before the case came on the caucus journals were wishfully talking of his retirement. "Sir William Lane-Mitchell, M.P. for Streatham, who has recently suffered ill-health," said

the *Morning Post*, "is understood to be anxious to leave the Commons. Captain Cunningham-Reid, Member for St. Mary-lebone, is also believed to be considering his position." C-R immediately routed the rumour, and the *Sunday Dispatch* reported the denial the following week, but added hopefully: "It is, of course, possible that Captain Cunningham-Reid may later decide not to stand again at the next general election." Once again the wish was begetting the belief.

Before a smart and glittering audience reminiscent of an opera first night, in the Chancery Court, Sir Stafford Cripps, famed as the Red Squire of Filkins, more famed as an advocate in complicated commercial disputes, opened the case for C-R, declaring that the financial deeds and arrangements entered into between the parties were binding and could not be revoked. Mrs. C-R had revoked them, hence the necessity for C-R to bring this action. Until her marriage, Sir Stafford Cripps explained, the wife had only a small income, and the prospective husband had even provided the money for her wedding present to him, the sum being recouped when, after the marriage, the wife became "an immensely wealthy woman possessed of an income of between £70,000 and £90,000 a year" as a result of her grandfather's will.

"Being much in love with her husband at that time," went on Sir Stafford, while the heavily jewelled audience pricked up their ears, "the wife was extremely anxious to provide an independent income for her husband"—an income that would not be so completely disproportionate to hers as the £2,500 a year he had before the marriage. The difficulty was that under the terms of her grandfather's will she was prohibited from disposing of any part of the capital, which was in the region of £2,000,000, so she proposed that any savings out of their joint incomes should be invested by the husband to build up a capital sum which he could call his own. Both paid into a joint account, and both were entitled to draw on it. By virtue of this arrangement, after paying current expenses, various sums were invested in the husband's name and a town house was acquired at a cost of £39,000. The Six Mile Bottom estate remained in the wife's possession under the terms of the trust set up under the will.

Mrs. C-R had been unable to settle any money on her husband, whereas Captain C-R had settled a large proportion of his money on her. That led her, on the honeymoon, to express the wish to do something to reciprocate, so she put forward the definite suggestion about the savings which was "a perfectly natural and wholly understandable desire in the circumstances."

Later in their married life, to protect her income against the depredations of the Treasury, certain companies were set up. "An arrangement was made," said Sir Stafford, "by which all the shares were in the wife's name but she executed a deed by which one-third of her income from the shares was to be paid direct to her husband by the company." This income would cease if the wife died. "Mrs. Cunningham-Reid," continued Sir Stafford, "asked her solicitors what would happen in the event of the dissolution of the marriage, and was informed that if she insisted on entering into a covenant to pay her husband one-third of the income for their joint lives, there should be trustees to return the shares to her. She refused to accept this advice. She said she fully appreciated the points raised and would be obliged if the directors of the company would seal the document. It was therefore abundantly clear that the document was intended not to be revocable without the consent of the other party. Unfortunately they part, and she now presumably regrets her action and is trying to withdraw from the position that she took up formerly, and to get back all her gifts to her husband, not apparently on the basis that she has any financial need of them, because she still has her very large income, but in order to take them away from her husband."

The court rustled with renewed interest. Lorgnettes concentrated more closely on the wealthy principals, she beside her counsel contemplating the floor, he sitting motionless on the opposite side of the court. Both the eminence of the well-groomed attractive pair and the magnitude of the money involved added to the force of the drama. Love might be blind, but a Chancery suit is an effective eye-opener. This one, as it developed over four days, took the lid off the life of the rich with a vengeance. There was drama enough in the human tangle, but the scale of values among the Smart Set was even more compelling. Counsel mentioned expensive gifts—two suitcases costing over £1,000 each, a motor boat costing the same, and a diamond ring priced at eleven times that sum, not to mention such bagatelles as cars and dogs. "There were also extensive gambling expenses," Sir Stafford said, "and these too were paid partly out of the joint account."

This brought Sir Patrick Hastings (the wife's counsel) to his feet: "Would you mind saying where there was extensive gambling?" Sir Stafford: "In the South of France, at Le Touquet and Palm Beach." Sir Patrick: "Somebody gambled extensively?" Sir Stafford: "Both parties gambled extensively."

Here Sir Patrick indicated the line of his subsequent assault. The wealthy onlookers tensed to the conflict, the more so as the

two legal leaders—of the three counsel briefed for each side—were not only among the most eminent in their profession, but both of a political complexion which the audience probably thought more suitable to a pleading for pennies in a workmen's compensation case than a tussle over multiple pounds.

Then Mr. Evershed, K.C.,* C-R's second counsel, joined in examining the plaintiff :

"By a marriage settlement it appears that you settled certain funds, namely £10,000."—"That is so."—"What proportion did that form of your property at that time?"—"It was something over a third."—"Now, after the marriage, how was it intended that you should live—you yourself—as regards earning money?"—"I was a Member of Parliament still."—"As such, you were entitled to what in this case would be regarded as a relatively small income?"—"Yes."—"Apart from that, was it in your mind that you would earn money comparable to your wife's income?"—"I did not have much opportunity for that. My wife had very large estates in the country which required looking after, and what with my parliamentary work and my duties in connection with my wife and her estates there was very little time for anything else."

Counsel then cleared up the question of the account. "Was there any limit to your authority to draw on the account?" he asked. "No," answered C-R. "Did you on occasion indulge in gambling?"—"I did."—"Was your wife with you on these occasions?"—"Yes."—"Did she gamble herself?"—"Yes, but not at the same table."—"Did you suffer large losses?"—"I lost a good deal."—"Did your wife know that?"—"Yes, and she was not much more fortunate."—"How were those losses paid by you?"—"Out of my private account, out of a joint account, or by cash."

These revelations naturally found reflection in the largest headlines as also did the domestic financial details. "M.P. IN MONEY DISPUTE WITH £70,000-A-YEAR WIFE. FUND PROVIDED TO MAKE HIM INDEPENDENT," shrieked the *Morning Post*. "M.P. AND WIFE'S ANXIETY TO PROVIDE FOR HIM," yelled the *Daily Telegraph*. "Fancy suing his wife," muttered bewildered readers. Yet C-R's claim was not without substance. He had devoted ten years to the pursuance of a mode of life not only approved but desired by the other party and was entitled to assume that the financial arrangements made to that end would not be suddenly revoked,

* Now Mr. Justice Evershed.

leaving him with a dead loss while the other retained whatever had been gained, socially and materially, from the partnership. That certainly was not her original intention, for in the correspondence between her and her own solicitors they had advised her, as the evidence showed, to make the income to her husband revocable, and she wrote back that "that would not conform with the purpose that I have in mind."

After the completion of the examination on the second day, Mr. Justice Crossman addressed Counsel on both sides. "Having regard to the relationship between the parties," said the Judge, "and I only say this now because of what may be the result of the cross-examination, is there no hope of an arrangement being come to?"

"Not at the moment," answered Sir Patrick, whose turn had now come to put the witness through it.

Knowing their Counsel, the reporters cocked their ears in anticipation of some juicy headlines.

Sir Patrick, whose reputation for grilling an opposing witness was legendary, began his cross-examination. He first dealt with the date the respondent had been made a ward of court by her father, and C-R agreed it was around August 1925. "Was the object to prevent a possible marriage which, to her father, seemed undesirable?" he asked. "I am afraid I can't speak for her father," answered C-R.

The nonchalance of the reply seemed to provoke Counsel to some degree of controversial warmth. He continued the dialogue with quick-fire truculence. "Do you really mean to say you did not know that this lady's father was anxious that she should not marry you?"—"No. I knew that this lady's step-mother was anxious."—"Would you consider then a marriage with you to have been imprudent?"—"I would not."

"You knew by that time she was a very love-sick girl?" suggested Sir Patrick. "We were in love with each other," said C-R. "You had had a good deal of experience of the world by the time you were thirty, had you not?"—"As much as anybody of that age."—"Well, some have little, and some have more than others, but you had had a great deal, had you not?"—"I do not know with whom you are comparing me."

So for more than six gruelling hours the cross-examination went on, Sir Patrick, as it was his business to do, probing every statement made in the testimony, inquiring into the plaintiff's private resources, casting doubt on the wife's ability to understand the import of the documents. Bitingly he inquired what she had to show for her income during her married life. C-R promptly replied: "She had her jewellery, a comfortable home,

her husband and children, and lots of women would like to have that and £70,000 a year." Sir Patrick: "That depends entirely upon the husband." C-R: "We were married for ten years. That was not bad."

Counsel made much of the fact that the wife's father had not been told of the financial arrangements made during the honeymoon—as though it was the habit of highly-sophisticated young socialites to tell their parents everything in the Mayfair of the rollicking 'twenties, especially about their savings, if any.

"When did you tell her father that she had made this gift to you?" roared Sir Patrick. "I did not tell him because it was not necessary," answered C-R calmly. "Was that because your wife never did anything of the sort?"—"No."—"Did you not think it desirable that you should tell her father or her trustees that she was giving you something of immense value within a week of being freed from the Chancery Court?"—"I did not consider it." Removing his glasses once more and putting them back again, Sir Patrick registered the proper degree of shock. "I suggest," he said, "that no honest man could have kept it to himself and not told her father or trustee. What do you say to that?"—"I say that it did not concern either of them."

Sir Patrick's performance elicited some signs of approval from the packed ranks of the court, but not sufficient to outweigh the impression created among the unprejudiced by the plaintiff's forthright evidence and unruffled bearing.

"Does it surprise you that she wants her home?" Counsel asked, referring to the London house, for the great country mansion and estate, Six Mile Bottom, belonged to Mrs. C-R. "Our home," corrected C-R. "Do you want to keep it?"—"I want some place for myself and the children."—"I suggest, you want to keep the home bought by this lady's money?"—"I do not want anything to which I am not entitled."

Later Sir Patrick asked whether the honeymoon started when the couple reached the South of France. The court laughed when C-R blandly replied, "Our honeymoon commenced after our marriage." Said Sir Patrick quickly, "I quite understand."

Sir Patrick then read a long letter C-R wrote to his wife after they had parted which ended with a suggestion that they should come together again. One would have thought the reading of this letter could do little good to Sir Patrick's case. Having read it, he asked C-R whether it were not like "Instructions

for Brief." A titter went round when C-R replied, "I have not seen as many as you have."

Played up under glaring headlines like "WIFE'S POSSESSIONS. HOUSE GIVEN TO HUSBAND. WIFE'S BLIND INFATUATION, DID NOT TELL FATHER. WANTS TO KEEP LONDON HOUSE." the cross-examination reports left nothing unsaid that could have redounded to the plaintiff's disadvantage. The disparagement ran over whole pages. Only towards the end of the third day did the barrage cease. By this time excitement was running high and the court doors had to be locked against the surging crowd anxious to pile into a place already packed.

Before the day's proceedings came to an end Mr. Evershed had time to say, "Captain Cunningham-Reid has been subjected to a severe cross-examination which has been both contemptuous and cynical." He went on to explain how "Captain Cunningham-Reid was taken out of a kind of living which was relatively humble and dropped into a way of living which was very highly extravagant; and now Mrs. Cunningham-Reid says, 'That is all finished, and now you can go back, and I want everything back.'" Counsel pointed out that the savings which Mrs. C-R was trying to get back from her husband amounted to only about one-eighth of her total income over ten years. Countering the claim that C-R had only acted as an agent for his wife, Counsel Evershed showed that the joint account had been jointly used over all the years without cavil or question, and said it was now far too late, whether her motives were noble or ignoble, for Mrs. C-R to say, "I want all the money back." The wife's solicitors specifically confirmed the arrangement alleged by her husband. Counsel also divulged that though the income the husband was entitled to from the companies was credited to his private account every penny had been transferred by him to the joint account—in fact, he had paid some £155,000 into that account or on behalf of it during the period in question. "Therefore," continued Mr. Evershed, "it would not appear to be a case in which the sole intention of the husband was to get what he could out of somebody else, which I gather to have been behind certain suggestions which have been made. That is the sort of suggestion which is easy to make, easy to report, and easy to believe in some quarters, but when one looks at the facts one sees at once that the suggestion cannot be true." Interposed Mr. Justice Crossman, "Do you mean to say that he was, using a vulgar expression, a mug not to have kept the lot?" "Well, my Lord," replied Mr. Evershed, "if he was the kind of man that Sir Patrick Hastings was asking your Lordship and anybody who reads the

papers to think that he was, that is the sort of thing he would have done. That was, no doubt, the designed effect of the cross-examination ; but it is not true."

Counsel went on to show that just prior to the separation all the money that C-R possessed was about to be expended on the building of an ultra-modern house for his wife and family. Since the split he had paid £20,000 super-tax which was mainly on behalf of his wife's income.

The session ended before C-R's Counsel had time to deal with all the evidence, but much of what he did have time to say found no room in the newspaper columns, coming as it did after Sir Patrick's meaty "copy." Yet what was missed had a great deal of importance, especially in view of the unexpected turn the case took on the following day.

When the court opened for the resumed hearing on the fourth day, it seemed that all Mayfair had massed for a gala. Rarely has the Law been honoured with such a display of society, furs, jewels, and gossip. The corridor was thronged with an expensively-dressed queue, and row upon row of mink, Persian lamb and silver-fox-wrapped women filled the court. In the rush to get in umbrellas were flourished and broken, hats swept off and trampled with handbags underfoot. Dresses were crushed and wraps torn, faces scratched and bodies bruised. Against the surging swarm attendants were almost helpless. Counsel had virtually to fight their way through the pack, Sir Stafford getting his gown ripped in the process.

Having watched C-R go through the torture of the forensic mill, the eager crowd now looked forward with relish to a like besmirchment of his wife. Under a penetrating cross-examination by the clear-headed Sir Stafford Cripps it was expected the other side of the story would be shown up. For three days sensation had been piled on sensation, and now the drama moved towards the climax. It was known too that on the previous day Sir Patrick and his aides had been joined in conference by Sir Felix Cassel, the wife's cousin and trustee. That added to the speculation. But this morning's session seemed slow off the mark, and for an hour the packed, heavily perfumed court waited in a high state of tension. The atmosphere was like that of an arena when the spectators wait avidly for the display. They were impatient to see the woman in the witness box.

At last there was a bustle around the bench and Sir Patrick appeared at the table. A breathless hush descended on the court, and it needed no usher to effect it. The great day was

about to begin. But the bottom was suddenly knocked out of all the crowd's ghoulis expectations. Sir Patrick brought them disappointing tidings.

Bowing to the Judge, he announced : " I am in a position to inform your Lordship that it will not be necessary for this case to proceed any further." The long-drawn " Oh " that swept the court was not unlike the groan which rises over the football field when some favourite forward misses a goal. Dejected, the spectators gathered their furs about them and prepared to depart. But before going they heard Sir Patrick announce that there were " no allegations of undue influence, fraud or dishonesty " against the Captain—which was a handsome withdrawal. Smiling, C-R left the court, arm in arm with his mother.

The excitement was over, and since there was no point in further splashing a story that was already done, very little prominence was given to Sir Pat's last words in the next day's journals. Had these words been given anything like the publicity afforded Sir Patrick's scathing questions, the public would have been left with a different taste in their mouths. Those few words were obviously of tremendous significance to C-R's reputation.

" In the circumstances," said the Judge, " I will refrain from saying anything except to congratulate the parties on having agreed to end what I can only regard as very unfortunate litigation."

The public was left guessing as to why the case abruptly ended. Conjecture was rife. Had the defence abandoned the match because they felt the wicket was sticky ? Though declining to settle at the Judge's first suggestion, had they now decided to ask for a halt after reflecting in what direction the evidence had thus far gone ? What might have been the verdict had the wife faced the same ordeal in the witness-box as her husband had endured ? One guess was as good as another. Regarding the terms of settlement, no public statement was issued. The *Evening Standard*, remarking later that the case had run to some 80,000 words and cost nearly £20,000, said it had " learned " that the Captain retained the town house, the money saved, and the motor yacht valued at £200, but in return for some other fixed sum waived his claim to a life-interest in a third of the wife's income.

The amount of that fixed sum was not then known, but whatever it was it is certain that C-R would have been deprived of it if he had not brought the action. Further, had he simply accepted the wife's revocation of settlements she might later

have sued for the savings accumulated from her £70,000 or more a year income—as she in fact did in her counter-claim. Had the case gone against him C-R would probably have been bankrupt and thus automatically have lost his seat in Parliament. Yet, because he refused to accept the revocation of settlements which legal experts stated to be binding he was branded as “not playing the game.”

That is the inside story of the *cause celebre*.

C-R's finances were greatly depleted. To add to his difficulties he now had to battle with life alone. His Croesus-like and influential in-laws, like the Tory chiefs, were turned against him. He might have found a measure of compensation had the Press given Sir Patrick's final exonerating words as much prominence as it had lavished on the spicier elements of the proceedings. In that event much of the odium which arose from the episode might have been obviated.

A CLASSIC IN CALUMNY.

WHEN a politician takes up the role of critic and achieves fame—or notoriety—for his truculence, it is commonly supposed, and indeed is often the case, that he is a disappointed man. Having failed to achieve promotion he nurses a grudge against the political big-wigs and thenceforward does his best to become a thorn in the side of those who have passed him by. "Sour grapes," whisper the know-alls, and in some cases they may be right, but no man in politics could persistently go through such a storm of parliamentary abuse and ridicule as C-R did for advocating various reforms unpalatable to the pundits if his only inspiration were personal pique.

Yet, strangely perhaps in view of all the other mud, no such accusation has been levelled against the Member for Marylebone. The evidence would be all against it anyway. Far from nursing an animus against his opponents, he has shown in many instances something more akin to compassion for them, believing their political errors to arise from the orthodox circumstances in which they were reared. On the same ground he has explained the difference between his own past outlook and the attitude he has taken in recent years. Always of an independent turn of mind, his transitional roots are plainly manifest in his early criticisms of authority. In *Planes and Personalities*, written in 1919 after leaving the R.A.F., he administered gentle rebuke to the political Command and, after entering Parliament, extended his criticism in this and other directions. His divergence from orthodox Conservatism has therefore been gradual and cannot be attributed to any single cause. He seems to have been moved rather by major political considerations, and, like many other people, has been influenced in no small measure by the second world war.

Of the impact of this event on his outlook he made a revealing admission when, in 1942, he published a slashing assault on official incompetence, entitled *Blame the Old Gang!* "It is surprising," he wrote, "that I have never yet been asked, 'Surely you were once a part of the system which you now condemn?' That would be a fair enough question, and my answer would be 'Yes. What of it? If one has made a mistake is it wrong to admit it?'"

Then, discussing the traditional set-up of Tory Governments and the men who compose them, he made some further confessions: "The expression 'Ruling Classes' has for generations

referred to those who have long family trees accompanied generally by long purses, together with a belief in an hereditary right to rule which incidentally enables them to keep an eye on their own interests. So young men of this type go into Parliament because it is expected of them—it is a duty—very much for the same reason that some people go to church: it is the right thing to do. Having got into Parliament they are at first not quite sure what it is all about, but they play the game by their side and do what they are told, and when, somewhat bewildered, they are pushed into a Government job, they are quite content to do what the permanent officials advise them to do, provided they can get away for long week-ends and innumerable parliamentary recesses."

That might be taken as a fair outline of his own early career. Then he asked pertinently: "Why, when we were a victorious nation, did we allow Germany to re-arm? Having allowed her to re-arm, why were we so unprepared for the consequences? Since the war why have there been so many inexcusable mistakes and avoidable hold-ups?" Then came the final confession: "It was this war that jerked me to my senses and brought it home to me with a vengeance that it was the old Party system of privilege and complacency that got us into this mess."

But if his opponents did not raise the cry of "sour grapes," they lost no opportunity of flaying him on other scores. Making the most of the unpleasant and one-sided publicity arising from the Chancery proceedings the local caucus made frenzied efforts to deprive him of his seat. The great majority of the Constitutional Union, however, unwilling to take advantage of a man down on his luck, remained loyal, "if only," as one supporter put it, "because he has looked after us." Having avoided the rocks of bankruptcy and now another squall of intrigue, the Member for Marylebone might have thought the storm was subsiding. But the wind soon freshened again.

A few weeks after the outbreak of war in 1939 the caucus made another attempt. Their former favourite, Sir Basil Blackett, being no longer in the running, they had for some time been building up the odds on Sir John Fitzgerald, the "Knight of Kerry," whom the *Evening Standard* described as "an Irish baronet of great wealth." Due to the din unleashed from Berlin the constituency was in some degree of confusion. The caucus must have thought their chance had come. All of a sudden they announced a general meeting of the Union for a Friday at noon—just the hour when most of the folk who worked for their living would be at their plants and factories and their women-folk shopping or cooking the dinner. The purpose was to adopt Sir John as prospective candidate. A

large crowd, indistinguishable from that which had recently embellished the Chancery Court, made an early monopoly of the front seats. It was a slick trick, but it didn't work. The cheers that rose from the back of the hall at C-R's entrance just after starting time indicated that the shops had been deserted, the cooking abandoned and the lunch-hour sacrificed. The result was a foregone conclusion. Sir John's proposed candidature was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

In 1940 C-R again ran into choppy weather. He went to America, and the caucus seized upon his absence as a pretext to slate him in Parliament and the constituency. This interlude marked the highlight in the campaign of calumny. Rarely has an M.P. been subject to a more unfair attack. The odium poured on the Member for Marylebone in 1940 when he left his constituency for a few weeks stands in glaring contrast to the encomiums showered on the Member for Warrington in 1928 when he was away for months! The difference was doubtless due to his changed relations with the Tory cabal in the twelve years' interval. In addition the gulf that yawned between 1928 and 1940 had swallowed all the heroes of World War I, and the national rulers were now fitting other haloes. It is a fate that befalls most heroes. They are remembered only in phrases, as very soon, if not already, will be remembered "the few."

C-R had hardly left the country on the American voyage when eminent folk in and around Marylebone began hinting that he had bolted from the pending inconveniences of war. The facts belie the accusation, but in passing it may be remarked that even if he had been putting the maximum distance between himself and Hitler he would not have been hastening without good company. Long before C-R departed, the Atlantic liners had already been crammed with notables seeking refuge in the Stork and other New York night-clubs. Months before he left London large parts of the fashionable squares were already in the hands of estate agents as also were dozens of imposing residences on the outskirts, the owners of which had scuttled at the first hint of the war extending beyond the confines of the Continent. Whole families had flown, many to the Dominions and the U.S.A., reducing Mayfair to a wilderness, and those who were unlucky besieged the shipping offices and cluttered the lists of aviation companies, offering enormous premiums for priority and pulling every string and wire in Whitehall to escape the personal consequences of a disaster largely of their own making. One of the first families to depart for foreign shores was, ironically enough, that of the then War Minister! The number of titled and near-titled personalities showing up in New York during the spring of 1940 constituted an all-time record, and before the blitz had ended

Britain—and certainly London—was bereft of its aristocracy to a degree unparalleled by any period of peacetime exodus to Continental resorts.

Before C-R's trip to America became news many other M.P.s had had occasion to cross the Atlantic, but except for some mild inquiries their journeyings aroused no hostile criticism. Nor was there any unusual remark concerning those who, when the bombs began to fall, suddenly developed a profound attachment to their provincial constituencies or discovered, as also did some Ministers, an urgent press of business in the country. The counties within easy car or train reach of London became as overcrowded as Mayfair was deserted. Country cottages were snapped up at mansion prices, two often being converted into one to compose a retreat of something near the accustomed standard. That was one of the reasons why there was such difficulty later in finding accommodation for women and children refugees. Rarely could a high official be contacted in London after dark in those days. Parliamentarians took care to get away before dusk. The same was true of the big-business magnates, some of whom, however, did muster up the courage to come to town by light of day to make weighty pronouncements on the course of the war and to applaud the "ingrained tenacity which would enable the British character to stand up to anything the Luftwaffe had to offer." They were brave folk, those phrase-makers.

As the days went by the whisperings about the absence of Marylebone's M.P. became more articulate. One of the noisiest protestants was William Wavell Wakefield, M.P. for Swindon. Mrs. Mavis Tate, Conservative M.P. for Frome, and Sir Thomas Moore, the like for Ayr Burghs, also aired their opinions about the Marylebone Member's neglect. Together they and others provided the substance of some nasty headlines, which was not surprising, seeing that they had for years lined themselves up with the Marylebone caucus. Now once again they took the lead in trouble-making. What C-R's absence had to do with them, Marylebonians found it difficult to appreciate, since all three had constituencies of their own to look after. As far as Wakefield was concerned, he subsequently announced his intention of leaving Swindon, where his majority was 975, to woo some of C-R's majority of 23,175.

† Not content with mere protestations, the caucus called for the Captain's resignation. As might have been expected the demand gained immediate support from the *Daily Telegraph* which, in addition to castigating the delinquent with some unpleasant asides on the attractions of Honolulu, also published his bad division record. During his protracted domestic worries

C-R had taken little interest in the House of Commons, with the result that at that period he seldom voted in a division. This was seized upon by his political opponents as another stick with which to beat him, but it lost its force when it was realised how many other M.P.s had similar bad division records.

But the self-righteous are ever remorseless in their flagellation of one who makes an occasional lapse. The Member for Swindon, who seemed to have become the spearhead of the local caucus, even tried to frighten C-R's constituents by telling them that "this constituency would be better represented by a Socialist than by the present Member"—a slice of wisdom that caused the *Yorkshire Evening News* to comment satirically: "Now wasn't it nice of Mr. Wakefield? It means that Mr. Bevin or Mr. Morrison may now with some confidence regard themselves as at least the equals of Captain Cunningham-Reid."

The suggestion that C-R had quitted London to dodge the blitz was a pretty mean charge to make against a man who had won the D.F.C. in aerial combat.* The sneer was clearly unfounded because he had departed before the blitz began and returned when it was at its height. But while the accused was away and unable to reply the tongue of malice could wag unchallenged. There were those who said his journey was a matrimonial adventure and, when it became known that he had actually visited Honolulu, the "romance" angle was played up for all it was worth.

While the sound and fury were at their height the errant C-R returned to town, arriving in the middle of one of the worst air-raids. His return apparently dismayed his traducers, and when he suddenly turned up at a meeting convened to confirm a demand for his resignation their embarrassment must have been acute. Up to that point not a word had been published as to the real reason for his trip to America.

Taking his place on the platform in an atmosphere thick with carefully fostered suspicions, the returned prodigal had to watch the caucus lash the crowd to the very apex of indignation against him. Swindon's sport-loving M.P., playing a long way from his home ground, inevitably took a conspicuous part in the denunciations. "The Prolongation of Parliament Bill," he said, "is now going through the Commons, which means that the life of this Parliament is going to be extended. When Captain Cunningham-Reid was elected for this constituency five years ago it was on the understanding that it would be for not more than five years and that an opportunity would be afforded this constituency to reject him and elect another person that was

* He is the only D.F.C. in the House of Commons.

thought fit.” It is not on record that Mr. Wakefield applied this queer argument to himself and his own constituency. But, exuding righteous indignation, the Member for Swindon went on to declare himself certain that C-R had lost the confidence of his constituents—if indeed he had ever enjoyed that confidence.* “I hope,” concluded Wakefield, metaphorically poised atop the debris of a demolished reputation, “I hope this meeting will ask Captain Cunningham-Reid to resign at once, and I hope he will have the decency to do so.”

There can be no doubt that C-R had been missed in Marylebone. He had put in some useful war work for the borough, organising, among other things, some of the best first-aid units seen up to that time. These units were in effect miniature hospitals on wheels, motor-vans complete with first-aid equipment and personnel, which could be rushed to any bomb incident in the area. Not only did he initiate and organise the scheme but he also shouldered the bulk of the cost. And, before going away, he also, according to the *Marylebone Record*, personally deposited £10,000 with the local Children's Evacuation Committee to cover the initial expenses of sending hundreds of London children to safety overseas. It was this intended seavacuation of Marylebone's children which had piloted C-R to New York.

Such, however, was the perfection of the newspaper suppress that most of his constituents were unaware of it. Nor had he undertaken the mission on his own authority. He had gone with the sanction of the Government department responsible for the evacuation of children. The Minister concerned knew all about it and the necessary exit permit had been issued and all facilities put at C-R's disposal. But no one at the “resignation meeting” had so far thought it necessary to mention these facts, though they must have been known to the caucus.

Eventually C-R was allowed to address the meeting. “Speaking in a leisurely manner and quite unperturbed by the tone of previous speakers and the various interruptions” reported the *Marylebone Record*, a journal not unduly disposed in his favour, “the Member for Marylebone declared he would waste no time on the contemptible insults and innuendoes.” Instead he came at once to the immediate business of the meeting and disposed of it without equivocation or quibble. It had been convened to demand his resignation, but its sponsors, he said, were doomed to disappointment, for even if they succeeded in carrying a vote

* It is worth noting that some time later (during the VI period), Wakefield himself left the country for a four months' trip to South Africa. At that time he was not only M.P. for Swindon but had been adopted a prospective candidate for Marylebone.

against him he had no intention of resigning. Cries of " Shame " mingled with those of approval at that forthright acceptance of the challenge.

For the rest, he said, the critics might find some satisfaction in the knowledge that they had hampered his efforts to get Marylebone's children to safety and had done nothing to gain the support of American opinion. As that was the period when Americans had got stuck at " all aid short of war " both points had rather more than debating value for his bomb-conscious audience and served to secure a respectable hearing for the rest of the story. There was a gasp of surprise as he revealed how Mrs. Doris Cromwell, a wealthy American friend, had made what has since been recognised as the most generous individual offer of assistance to Britain.

This was of course the lady who had been darkly hinted as the chief attraction of the journey. She had offered to provide accommodation for 500 British children in the United States. This number was subsequently increased following further aid enlisted among her friends. " To make the necessary arrangements," said C-R " was a considerable undertaking, and as Mrs. Cromwell was unable to supervise it herself she asked that I should do it for her, which I proceeded to do, with the consent and assistance of the Childrens' Overseas Evacuation Board."

At this reference to the sponsoring of the journey by an official department the audience showed astonishment. C-R continued : " By going to America I was able to complete the plans for the reception of all the children, but, unfortunately, all that has now been stopped by the Government's decision to discontinue the evacuation of children overseas." This decision, he revealed, was published in the United States about a week before his departure for home, and coincided with the American Press headlining " British Member of Parliament asked to resign. Was arranging to bring hundreds of children here."

C-R reported how he had " explained to this bewildered group of Americans that the demand for my resignation has nothing to do with my Government, which had indicated through the appropriate channels its warm appreciation of ' such generous initiative ' and ' such a munificent offer ' (to quote a letter from Mr. Geoffrey Shakespeare, Under-Secretary for the Dominions, the Government's representative) and had given me an exit permit to make the necessary arrangements."

He had further explained that these American Press reports, which Mrs. Cromwell and those associated with her were inclined to regard as evidence of British official ingratitude, were in fact " only the rumblings of a small minority of individuals in my

constituency actuated by petty motives." These Americans, he added, were generous enough to accept this explanation.

The gasp now became more audible, and there were some distinctly menacing glances thrown in the direction of the caucus. Sensing the changing atmosphere, C-R took the opportunity to deliver a homily in the same direction. "We should be more than careful over here not to do anything that could again be misconstrued by our American friends," he warned, "especially those who have shown their sympathy for us in such a practical way. Let us rather record our warm thanks and appreciation in no uncertain manner, and for a change let something pleasant go back to them so that they may realise that the sentiments of the majority are very different from what they have heard up to now from an insignificant minority."

The unprejudiced part of the audience at this stage no longer tried to hide their amazement at the crude accusations under which the caucus had striven to conceal the facts. But when the vote was taken it became plain that the past weeks of unchallenged propaganda had had their effect. Many of C-R's supporters, influenced by the campaign of misrepresentation and feeling he had let them down, deliberately avoided the meeting. The vote consequently went against him. Yet in the face of defeat he made no concession. "Let me tell this small Marylebone clique," he rapped out, "who are pushing their own candidate and whose dislike for me is only surpassed by my dislike for them, that these constant, petty and useless attacks will only prolong the dispute and determine me to continue fighting them."

The rank and file, realising later how the wool had been pulled over their eyes, insisted that the Union should reverse its decision and give the Captain a vote of confidence, which it did in spite of the efforts of the caucus. In the meantime, though his explanation of his American mission was given practically no publicity, a number of newspapers did approve the principle of his refusing to resign at the request of a small minority of his constituents. Said the *Nottingham Guardian* :—

"Quite apart from the merits of the dispute that has arisen between the M.P. for Marylebone and his own party constituency association, the case is a reminder of the strong title of an M.P. in the seat to which he has been elected. The fact that M.P.s are paid in these days does not affect this hold in the least. Party executives and constituency meetings may demand resignations and may nominate prospective successors, but unless an M.P. commits a crime or is adjudicated a bankrupt—in which case Parliament itself declares his seat vacant—he can sit tight

and ignore such demonstrations while the life of the particular Parliament to which he is elected lasts. There is nothing exceptional or startling in this situation, however, as some people are now suggesting. Incumbents of the Church of England are in an even stronger position of security of tenure, while in practice, if not in theory, State and municipal employees are heavily sheltered in a similar respect."

Said the *Evening Star* :

"Captain Cunningham-Reid is well within his rights in refusing to resign his seat in the Commons following the resolution passed over the week-end by the St. Marylebone Conservative and Constitutional Union. He was, of course, returned not by any political association, but by a majority of the electors of the constituency."

Even more to the embattled culprit's surprise the *Evening Standard* devoted a whole page to his defence. Michael Foot, one of Fleet Street's most pungent essayists, writing to the caption "Hats Off to Cunningham-Reid!" made a scathing attack on the caucus and a magnificent defence of C-R's parliamentary rights.

"I give you a cry to make the old rafters of Westminster ring, and to make the old grafters shudder: 'CUNNINGHAM-REID AND LIBERTY!' I am his defender in this forlorn city."*

But still the facts of C-R's mission received practically no publicity. Consequently the suspicion hung heavily around that just for fun and safety he had gone to the U.S.A., including Honolulu, and on more than one occasion it found expression in the Commons. Again the slime of calumny was sticking.

Typical was the taunt unleashed during a debate in the Commons when C-R was criticising the Information Ministry's mishandling of British news in America. The speech was a telling indictment of official incompetence, and the Minister was clearly stuck for a reply. What better, then, than to resort to the old tactic of discrediting the witness with a totally irrelevant sneer.

Here is the Ministry's Parliamentary Secretary dodging the issue, as culled from Hansard :

Mr. Harold Nicolson : "Captain Cunningham-Reid has been in America more recently than I have, and his visits to that country, although not as frequent as my own, have been more extensive. Whereas I did not go beyond California, such was

*See Appendix page 258

his interest in American social reform that he pushed his researches right out into the islands of the Pacific. (Honolulu.) I am afraid I never followed him there."

Mr. Granville : " Is that a joke or a punch below the belt ? "

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " Will my hon. Friend care to say why I had to go to the islands of the Pacific ? "

Mr. Nicolson : " I think it was something to do with child welfare."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " Exactly. It was on account of the evacuation of children, and I was asked to undertake the mission by the appropriate department. This gibe is getting cheap."

The quip about Honolulu was duck soup for the Press, but the readers were never told anything of the speech that had evoked such sarcasm. *Yet the injustice of the retort was tacitly agreed by Nicolson himself, despite the grudging character of the admission that " it was something to do with child welfare." As a member of the Government he knew quite well the purpose of the trip—and he was aware too that had C-R's report to the Marylebone meeting been in any way fictitious the official departments concerned would not have been slow to point it out.

*See Appendix page 260.

VINDICATION

EVERY objective and unbiased mind aware of the facts recognised the injustice and unworthiness of the attempt to break the Member for Marylebone because of his journey to America. The falsity of the charge was beyond doubt. There was no secrecy about the visit. It was in every respect an officially acknowledged mission and was undertaken in the interests of the Member's own constituents.

Had the opposition admitted defeat and the newspapers published the explanation no more might have been heard of the matter. But the opprobrious chatter was not allowed to subside. The accusation was far too useful a weapon to be abandoned by the caucus. Even if it wasn't true it was not to be put aside on that account. By constant reiteration it might be made to seem true.

As the records show, there was no let-up in the smear campaign. In the House there were frequent allusions to "Honolulu" and in time it became a jibe that might have goaded any reasonable person to fury, as it was probably intended to do. C-R managed to keep his feelings under control. At length, however, the whole cowardly business aroused the indignation of the late Josiah Wedgwood, the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (subsequently Lord Wedgwood), ever a valiant champion of the oppressed.

Prompted by his own keen sense of justice, the incorruptible "Josh" sent a vigorous protest to Geoffrey Shakespeare, M.P. for Norwich and Chairman of the Children's Overseas Reception Board, which had handled evacuation. His letter constitutes an *ex parte* statement and puts a seal on the whole controversy. Here is the letter :

"House of Commons. 20th November, 1940.

"Dear Shakespeare,—This attack on Cunningham-Reid for going to America strikes me as both stupid and caddish. Stupid, because insulting to America, and caddish because started for quite other personal reasons in the man's absence.

"For his voyage to America you and I can share the responsibility. I believed, and still believe, that to get our children and useless mouths to America and have them cared for there till all danger of invasion was over was in the public interest. Five of my own grandchildren went. American hospitality has been most moving and magnificent. Mrs. Cromwell offered to take five hundred children, which would

have cost her about £50,000 a year, provided Cunningham-Reid would make all arrangements and be responsible.

"Of course I urged him to go, and of course your Department arranged it. It is intolerable that this should be made a ground against him for an insinuated charge of cowardice, and that fellow members in the House, in his own party, should make insulting attacks on him—or, in less degree, upon Roland Robinson and Captain Plugge. I purpose to go to America myself, and I shall go with a perfectly clear conscience for what I believe to be my country's interest. I do not imagine that Sir Thomas Moore, with his pro-Nazi past, or Mrs. Tate, or Mr. Wakefield, will raise an eyebrow, or produce from my constituency a request for my retirement on the ground that I have not 'kept a five year contract' or any such nonsense.

"Unlike his detractors, Cunningham-Reid served in the Flying Corps in the last war and won the D.F.C., which rather disposes of the running-away sneer. The other charges voiced in his Marylebone Tory caucus appear equally childish, if less offensive.

"'No children have gone under his scheme.' I should think that would be explained by the stupid attacks on him started over here whilst he was in America, embarrassing to him and insulting to American generosity, to say nothing of the fact that our own Government's change of policy stopped all such schemes.

"'He need not have gone to America.' I should think he was the best judge of that—or your department! He would not have got a penny for the scheme unless he had gone. That is pretty clear.

"He actually went on to Honolulu! Why on earth should Mrs. Cromwell not only finance the whole thing, but be expected also to travel to New York just after child-birth?

"'He never consulted us about going!' murmur the caucus. I don't wonder. Who could blame him? Which of us would consult our caucus? Anyway, he left his Vice-Chairman, Alderman Fettes, with £10,000 of his own monies to work the scheme from this end until he returned—so the Alderman tells me.

"And the last public charge is that 'his division record was low!' The same applies to other M.P.s, but that is one of the best things I have heard about him, considering the sort of things he would have been voting for these last few years. But even you, with your sound Chamberlainite views, are aware that walking through the lobbies is easier, though less useful, than walking through the streets of one's own

constituency. I have heard it whispered that he did too much of that for the comfort of the caucus.

"I do not share Cunningham-Reid's political views—never have, and I hope never shall—but my reason for writing you this letter for publication (and your reply, if you send one) is two-fold. One, there is a certain freemasonry or mutual fairness among Members of Parliament which it is good to preserve. Two, I had once a caucus which for the same real reason called on me to resign. I refused. That was twenty-one years ago, and my constituency has endorsed and supported me ever since. We are fighting this war for democracy and fair play. Had we not all better practice at home what we preach? Yours ever—Josiah C. Wedgwood."

Coming from Wedgwood, a rare parliamentary personality and a man whose integrity was absolutely above reproach, that letter would have shamed as well as silenced men of equal integrity. Wedgwood sent the letter out for publication, but the newspapers almost unanimously ignored it. The public therefore still had only the previous one-sided version of the story, a fact that enabled the calumniators in the House to continue, parrot-like, shouting "Honolulu," confident in the knowledge that none of the so-called organs of public opinion would offer refutation.

At this stage, it might be of interest to flash back to 1928 when C-R, then a blue-eyed boy of the Tory party, had just married a fabulously rich connection of Royalty and had the best shooting and other entertainment to offer. At that time he went abroad not for a mere eleven weeks as in 1940, but for seven months. When he eventually returned M.P.s and Ministers greeted him effusively, all anxious to extend a patient ear to the details of his travels. Neither Press nor Parliament ventured a word of criticism on his long disappearance from the political scene. Nowhere did anyone raise even a suggestion of protest against what amounted to a prolonged disfranchisement of his constituents. On the contrary, far from neglecting his duties the gallant Captain had, it seemed, fulfilled them on the highest plane, thus bestowing great honour on his constituents and bringing the hope of much advantage to the country!

As was remarked about the 1940 rumpus, the headlines would have been very different had C-R still been *persona grata* in "the highest circles." In that case the *Daily Telegraph* might have yelled: M.P. TAKES BIG RISKS FOR CHILDREN. CUNNINGHAM-REID DEFIES U-BOATS. FINDS REFUGE FOR 500. RACES BACK TO FACE BLITZ. SHARES DANGER WITH CONSTITUENTS.

Politics is a fickle mistress. A Tory favourite may steal a horse, but a despised Independent may not look over the fence.

BLITZING THE OLD GANG

DESPITE the Wedgwood letter, C-R's subsequent risings in the House were often the signal for offensive catcalls. They may have been intended to keep him down or to throw him off his stride if he persisted in getting up. Whatever the purpose, their result was to add to the liveliness of the scene, and if the pilgrim's further progress through the Commons was often hectic it also had the merit of never being dull. Unchastened by the catcalls, he went on from week to week exposing official ineptitude and attacking incompetent Cabinetees with well directed and increasing vigour.

Shortly after his tiff with Harold Nicolson, he had another go at the Ministry of Information, but no sooner had he begun to puncture Duff Cooper's futile propaganda bubbles than he was brought to a dead stop by the parliamentary trick known as "the count." This is a favourite manoeuvre for silencing critics. The Government Whips simply get the necessary number of M.P.s to leave the Chamber and then put up some stooge to call the Speaker's attention to the fact that there is not a quorum present. A count is taken and if there are fewer than 40 members present the business comes to an end. Technically, the House "adjourns."*

Thus gagged, C-R bided his time. A few days later he sallied forth again, this time after bigger game—none other than the Chief Whip himself who, next to the Prime Minister, was and is the most powerful man in Parliament. C-R opened up a withering broadside on that gentleman and his office. As was to be expected, the attack hit the headlines with a bang. Once again, however, the reports were completely distorted. The *Daily Express* labelled its version "A queer speech" and kept the story true to the title. What the Member for Marylebone actually said has to be extracted from the Official Report. Here is the "queer speech"†:—

"The greatest menace to the country to-day is the continuation of the 'old school tie' predominance in politics. It has developed a practice that overlooks inefficiency and administrative shortcomings, provided that the offender conforms to the standards laid down by the 'Margesson

* This attack, though "counted out" early on, was significant, for later the same month both Duff Cooper and Harold Nicholson were removed from the M.O.I.

† Hansard, 22nd July, 1941.

school.' By the 'Margesson school' I mean the system whereby the discipline of Government Ministers and M.P. supporters is controlled through the Government Whips' office, a system perfected by Captain Margesson who, for so many years, was Chief Whip. Few Conservatives could hope for advancement unless they were approved by the 'Margesson school' and conformed to the necessary standards. These standards do not necessarily include ability, but, with few exceptions, it is essential that candidates should be popular types of men who belong to the so-called hereditary ruling class, and it has been noticed that, if they also happen to be hunting men, their careers in the Government are assured, starting in the Whips' office as Junior Whips—an appropriate hunting term.*"

Unaccustomed to such forthright speaking, the assembled M.P.s perked up their ears. C-R continued :—

"Of course, it is also demanded that they should be good party men, which, in plain language, means that they shall be docile, that they will do what they are told and not ask awkward questions. All this may sound fantastic, but nevertheless it is true, and in some ways it is reasonable and from the Chief Whip's point of view quite understandable, because his is the responsibility of seeing that there is no trouble for the Government or, anyhow, as little trouble as possible. The Chief Whip is not likely to recommend to the Prime Minister of the day that some brilliant stormy petrel, with the strength of his convictions, be given a Government appointment. To have somebody within the nest who might take a strong and independent line would be just asking for trouble. That is why the present Prime Minister, and Lord Beaverbrook, and I understand, Lord Rothermere, were constantly excluded from succeeding Governments.

"Then, again, one can appreciate that in the Whips' Office it is essential there should be good team work, and as the Chief Whip very naturally chooses to help him men whom he knows and whom he can trust—that is to say, his friends—he does so sometimes regardless of whether they have political aptitude or keenness. Prior to entering the Whips' Office the present Chief Whip, the Hon. James Stuart, had attended 88 Divisions out of a Session of 414 Divisions, so it will be seen that it is not conscientious application to House of Commons duties that is considered to be of paramount importance. To that extent, I ought to be in the running for a Whip's job, because I think there was a period when my Division record was worse than was the record I have just

* Whip—from whipper-in, the man in charge of the hounds during the hunt.

mentioned. I wonder if my reasons for non-attendance at that period were the same as his ? ”

That was a nasty crack. Astute Members could see that C-R was getting a bit of his own back, and some of them were not displeased. C-R went on :—

“ The Whips’ Office being the main stepping-stone to all other Government appointments, is it to be wondered at, realising how Conservative Whips are chosen, that many key positions to-day are held by ‘ jolly good fellows.’ ? But when you come to examine their ability for such vital war-time responsibility, that is a very different matter. There are first-class men in this House of Commons today, who, although they may not conform to the outward conventional standards required by the Whips’ Office, and although they may have few friends and no relations in high places, possess attributes which would help this country, which it would appear, to my simple mind, is more important than being just a ‘ jolly good fellow.’ I refer to attributes such as efficiency, alertness, driving power and toughness. How many of the millstones hanging round the Prime Minister’s neck today have those qualities ? One senior Minister, by being in office with both Baldwin and Chamberlain, lost all his independence. He now agrees with everybody. He was head of a vital war department that has important and essential work to do day and night, but he became so complacent that even when matters were serious he used to go home to the seaside nearly every night and week-end. That Minister is still in the Government today.”

Far from decrying the speech as “ queer,” millions of people all over Britain would have hailed it as eminently correct and very much to the point had they been given a chance to read it in their morning papers. What C-R had the courage to say openly many other M.P.s were at that time saying in private. For the Government was just then making a pretty sorry hash of the war and would probably have made worse had not Marylebone’s Member and a few others challenged its complacency and from time to time forced changes among the ruling personnel. Hand on lapel, making no gestures but speaking with great deliberation as though aware, as he must have been, of the scorpions he would let loose on himself by such a fundamental assault on the official nest, the speaker continued :—

“ The Government Whips’ Office is nearly as powerful as any Prime Minister because, as I have indicated, it is this office that suggests and provides for all Government key positions. This office has the inestimable advantage of being comparatively inconspicuous. It is the only Government

Department that does not have to give an account of its stewardship. It is more silent than the so-called 'Silent Service.' The power that it wields behind the scenes is positively extraordinary. It has been observed that the most independent of characters get drawn under its spell sooner or later. Has the Prime Minister been affected? Our system of government is such that a Prime Minister, of necessity, becomes dependent on his Whips' Office. The Whips' Office provides the barometer of political weather. It warns the Prime Minister if a legislative storm is brewing, and suggests procedure for overcoming it. The untimely end of a Government is often avoided by the tactics of the Whips' Office. Its advice is taken on ministerial appointments, and, as the Whips have always been sticklers for team work, one realises that they naturally lean towards men who will create no trouble once they are within the inner circle. No man worked harder or more successfully than Captain Margesson to keep Winston Churchill out of office when Captain Margesson was Chief Whip. Nevertheless, it is significant that when the present Prime Minister became Prime Minister, he not only kept Captain Margesson on as Chief Whip, but eventually put him in supreme charge of our Army—the very same man who was in the inner councils of the Baldwin-cum-Chamberlain rule of unpreparedness, the same man who showed such faulty judgment in being a party to excluding the present Prime Minister from office when his influence might have done immense good, and might even have saved this country from war.

"The Baldwin-Chamberlain influence does not end there, for although in the present Government there is a sprinkling of Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists who have not been tainted with the influence, as many as fifty Ministers who held office when ineptitude and complacency let us down so badly are still in the Government today. In the latest re-shuffle only one of the old gang has been removed, and that has been offset by one of what I might call the new gang also being removed and dispatched to the wilderness of the B.B.C. The 'old school ties' are still bunched together to the extent of 60 per cent. of the present Government. They hold nearly two-thirds of the key positions."

"One is entitled to ask," went on C-R, relentlessly rubbing it in, "why the products of the 'Margesson school,' that has always been satisfied with muddling-along standards, provided the pupils were of the approved type, suddenly should miraculously be able to transform themselves into men of energy, imagination and driving power? It is asking too much. Only a very few of these legacies are fitted to cope

with the present crisis. It is very difficult to teach old dogs new tricks. It is fresh minds, with new tricks, that are going to win this war. Therefore, I ask, is it not time that the Baldwin-Chamberlain old boys reunion was broken up and was replaced by all and sundry, regardless of the colour of their ties, provided only they are of outstanding ability in particular spheres and possess the necessary thoroughness and ruthlessness to beat the Hun?"

Never before had those god-like beings, the all-powerful Whips, been attacked in such a straight-from-the-shoulder manner. The Chief Whip, James Stuart, the Earl of Moray's second son, was present during the speech, but made no attempt to reply to it. He could afford to wait. He had the power to use other means of dealing with this rebel.

Meanwhile C-R elaborated his views in a book entitled "Besides Churchill—Who?" This proved a best-seller and he quickly wrote another—"Blame the Old Gang!"—which went better still, and as by then his writings were reaching an extensive and growing public he took advantage of it to turn out a third, "Will It Be Peace?"—all three produced in a little over twelve months.

Having denounced incompetence and trounced the responsible pundits, towards the end of the year (1941) C-R turned up at the Conservative Party Annual Conference. The atmosphere was, as usual, like that of a Church Assembly. Prosperous Tories from all over the country sat in serried ranks automatically passing pious resolutions to give youth a chance and the under-dog a break. Many of the delegates no doubt took them seriously, some positively beamed with self-satisfaction, but the chiefs on the platform smiled knowingly, for they knew the resolutions would get no further than providing good material for electioneering pamphlets. Everything was going nicely according to plan when C-R rose at the back of the hall and intimated to the Chairman that he would like to address the delegates. The request was so unusual as to amount almost to sacrilege. After conferring hurriedly among themselves the Party Chiefs, realising that as a delegate he was within his rights, reluctantly invited him on to the platform.

With all eyes turned upon him he marched from one end of the Caxton Hall to the other, mounted the platform and without so much as "if you please" pitched into them right away. Accusing them of hypocrisy, he told them the resolutions they had passed were bogus. They were only intended to give lip-service to the cause of democracy. "This hardy annual to give youth a chance," he said, "is all my eye, for seats will still be sold to the longest purse, and capable youths with no blue

blood in their veins and few pence in their pockets will go on knocking at the door until their knuckles are shorn of skin." If a local party organisation dared to carry out the spirit of the resolution and chose a young man unapproved by the Party Whips, that local organisation would be ostracised by headquarters.

Had the speaker a premonition of the fate that awaited his local organisation six months later? Time certainly confirmed his forecast, but for the moment he was thinking in retrospect. Turning the heat on the Conservative Whips again, he charged it to their faulty choice of men that the country was unprepared for war, and also lay at their door many of the blunders and catastrophes that afterwards took place.

Unwilling to continue exposing the delegates to such a shower of home truths, the Chairman rang the bell and C-R was compelled to stop. The reporters, naming him "the opposition," said he was "gonged."

After his two-fold attack on the Whips—in the Commons and at the Conference—no trick was overlooked to prevent C-R expressing his views in Parliament.

Freedom of speech is supposed to be one of the greatest national heritages in respect of which the Mother of Parliaments sets a dazzling example. Yet as an M.P. representing around 65,000 British citizens C-R was continually being gagged. After he had been silenced during the attack on Duff Cooper the Party managers no doubt hoped he would be a good boy and cease to embarrass the Government. Contrarily, he put his head down and went all out for the Whips whom he considered responsible for obstructing him. This was too much for the pundits. The rebel really must be tamed. So the next time Mr. Speaker called his name C-R got no further than rising to his feet. Again "the count" was invoked to prevent him having his say.

Soon afterwards he tried again. On this occasion he was allowed a short innings. He spoke about the United States and the War. This was before Pearl Harbour had rudely shaken the Yanks out of their Isolationist dreams. Saying he did not think the House fully realised what Britain was up against in the U.S.A., he quoted from an American syndicated news column :—

"The facts are, folks, in the plain English which we are only now beginning to hear spoken, that England knows she cannot win the war against Germany, but she positively will not make any peace, no matter how honourable a peace might be offered. Any German offer of a peace conference with

honour, Lord Vansittart says, will always have a certain degree of acceptance among the mugs of high circles as well as low. But no compromise peace is possible.

"Why is that? Because the British Empire expects America to do her fighting for her, and to drag her chestnuts out of the hot coals of the war she has declared and the diplomatic complications she has involved herself in. We Americans could not say this and be believed, but when English lords and generals and Members of Parliament say it, it must be recognised as true. Moreover, Mr. Attlee, Member of the British War Cabinet, repeats it, and Mr. Churchill, Premier of England, definitely declares it."

The member was preparing to develop his theme, when—whang! he was stopped by the same old device.

The following day he essayed a counter-trick. On the chance that there might be a little time left when Government business was finished, he had been lingering impatiently at the far end of the Chamber, and when the last speaker had finished he strode out and caught Mr. Speaker's eye, and before anybody realised exactly what was happening had said: "As I was prevented yesterday from completing my speech I intend to attempt to do so today. It is somewhat of a novel departure, but it seems to me that I have to complete my speeches in serial form."

He then continued his speech of the day before. He appealed to the Ministry of Information to concentrate on enlightening the American people. He ended with another dig at the Whips, saying: "Mr. Speaker, much to my surprise after three abortive attempts I have been allowed to complete a speech in this House. I would suggest that if any Member reading the *Official Report* is interested in the information I have given, he would be good enough to glance through my first instalment of yesterday. Further contributions will be continued in my next, Whips permitting."

The Whips had tried to wear him down, but for the time being he had worn them down. They therefore decided apparently to drop the muzzling tactic and try another trick. Word went out to the faithful that C-R should be allowed to speak, but that he should always be jeered at, insulted, ridiculed. Wherefore this Westminster pastime became extremely popular amongst the place-finders. The rules of the game were, "if you can't think of a good reply, ignore what he says and attack him personally." To which was added the adjuration: "If you do not want a black mark against your name never be seen talking to him."

This, bear in mind, was the same man who a few years earlier was a lion among the younger Tory flock, and whose popularity had been enormous. He then lived in a blaze of political praise and socialite publicity. The Premier's family lived next door to him, and graced his town house parties, which also exercised a constant pull on the big-shots of Lords and Commons. Now all that seemed just ashes. Those who had eagerly partaken of his munificent hospitality turned the cold shoulder—he was jeered at, calumniated, ostracised. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Having discarded the party platitudes he had to carve out his own line of parliamentary activity. As an ex-Serviceman who had frequently championed Servicemen it was not unnatural that he should continue in that direction, but with the difference that the gloves were now off.

FIGHTING FOR THE FORCES

ONE of the most astonishing things in the history of modern war is the meagreness of the money handed out to the warriors. Historians will some day stand appalled at the disparity of word and deed which characterised the politicians of the 20th century. Himself a warrior of deeds, it is not surprising that C-R often clashed with the warriors of the word. Right from his first entry into the Commons in 1922, as the chronicle shows, he had demonstrated in Parliament consistent interest in Service matters. A volume could be compounded of his speeches on Air and Army affairs during the past twenty-three years, but for the moment let it suffice to observe that he did not suddenly become the Servicemen's advocate when, faced with a long-delayed general election, there were some Service folks' votes to catch.

In 1941 he demanded substantial increases in pay and later made so bold as to specify a figure of 5s. a day for the ordinary private with corresponding increases in dependents' allowances. By that time the country was becoming alive to the wide divergence between the fervour of Ministerial platform patriotism and the parsimony doled out to the men. Encouraged by the support of a few other M.P.s, notably Sydney Silverman of Colne, and Fred Bellenger of Bassetlaw, during the "Treason" debate of February 10th, 1942, (which has been referred to), C-R tackled the matter again a few days later. Quoting this time from the letters which had reached him from Service folk and civilians all over the country he condemned the Government's reluctance to make reasonable concessions, and emphasized that the reason was, as Grigg had previously admitted, their fear that an increase in war-time pay would overload the Army bill in times of peace.

"I somehow feel," said C-R, "that that is typical of the old school tie mentality which continues to approach our war-time problems in a peace-time manner. That is the kind of mentality which is such a menace to many Government departments at the present time, departments which I hope and believe, if rumour is right, are at this moment being reconstructed."*

The Government reconstruction he referred to was in fact effected a few days later and War Secretary Margesson and his Under-Secretary Edward Grigg (not to be confused with Sir

* This revealing speech appears in the Appendix, page 261.

James Grigg) were removed from office. That their removal should have taken place so soon in the wake of his agitation must have given the rebellious C-R some grim satisfaction, for Captain Margesson, before stepping up to the War Office, had for five years been the chief Tory Whip.

While C-R was slamming away at the bunglers, Sir Ronald Ross, Tory Member for Londonderry, sat waiting, and no sooner had C-R finished than Sir Ronald began to attack him personally. But he did not get very far. Almost immediately Garro-Jones, the quick-witted and courageous Labour Member for North Aberdeen, jumped to his feet and calling a point of order, said: "I really wish to know in what manner the repeated insults and the unwarranted innuendoes which are passed on every occasion the hon. and gallant Member for Marylebone speaks can be brought to an end, for the credit of this House." Garro-Jones was plainly angry, and his protest reflected the opinion of other Members. Sir Ronald did not continue.

Three weeks later C-R was again in full cry on the Service question. This time he included the A.T.S. and, giving chapter and verse, drew attention to the bleak and uncomfortable conditions under which many of the girls had to live. Though he thought "an absolutely contented woman as rare as eidelweiss on Hampstead Heath," he believed the improvements he demanded "would pay a dividend out of all proportion to the expenditure involved."

Switching back to general pay and conditions in the Forces, he got in a number of hard punches before the Speaker tumbled to the fact that he was out of order. He wanted to know "what the new brooms at the War Office are going to sweep up for the families of the men who at present are getting a very raw deal." He hoped that "the new Minister for War intends to adjust conditions so that the standard of living of the soldier's family shall be the same as that of the average industrial worker's family. Until that is done I say quite frankly and at the risk of the authorities calling me every name under the sun, that you will not get the majority of married soldiers to put their hearts into their work." Fixing his eye on the Front Bench, he declared that "the Government spokesmen can indulge in as many heroics as they like but such heroics will be of no avail because the cold fact remains that if a soldier's dependents are not looked after fairly you cannot expect to get the best out of him."

In a neat passage he summarised his previous agitation for better conditions and incidentally made a sly pass at the Prime Minister. "I recently told the last Secretary of State for War

(Capt. Margesson) that if he could not manage to arrange that his soldiers, especially those of the lower ranks, were no longer underpaid, he ought to go. On a subsequent occasion on the same subject, I informed the late lamented Under-Secretary for War (Sir Edward Grigg) that he was quite incapable of moving with the times. When, soon afterwards, the Ministerial services of these two gentlemen were dispensed with, my heart warmed to the Prime Minister ; but soon I became perplexed as to why, if Captain Margesson was considered an unsatisfactory War Minister, the Permanent Under Secretary of the War Office (Sir James Grigg) who, as we all know, was with Captain Margesson co-responsible for policy, should be the right man to take his place."

Mr. Speaker : " That has nothing to do with the Vote before the House."

C-R : " In that case, allow me to conclude by saying that the realisation of better pay and allowances for soldiers and better conditions for the A.T.S. would go a long way to provide me with an answer to that conundrum about which I have been perplexed."

Earlier in his speech he had warned Major Henderson, the new Under-Secretary for War, that he would continue his "persistent pestering" until results were conceded. Returning now to Henderson he said : " I believe this will be his maiden effort as a Minister and I take this opportunity of wishing him luck in his new venture. I am also very glad that I am to supply him with his baptism of fire, and I shall if necessary keep up the fire with my own particular type of sub-machine-gun." After asking a specific question about better conditions for the A.T.S. he added facetiously : " Would it not be possible to give me an answer today at the risk of every Member present in the House fainting ? Or is it necessary to wait an interminable time while such a small matter as this is referred to various departments and committees, a process which, as many of us know to our cost, generally ends in the answer coming back in the form of a very small wizened lemon."

Henderson, to his credit, gave a decent and well-considered reply to the points raised, and ended by saying : " Although the hon. and gallant Member spread his net rather wide—there was no question of his spreading it in vain—I hope he will derive satisfaction from my statement that certainly I am prepared to consider any proposal that he puts forward. . . . I trust the hon. and gallant gentleman will not have to use his machine-gun too often on me, but if he does I hope that I shall be able to make a successful counter-attack on him."

The House, observing the new official line, looked from C-R to the Minister, and back again with visible surprise. The rebel was certainly getting somewhere. The attitude of the War Office had clearly changed. No longer was the cry of treason raised, and the House was not slow to note the difference. The ice having thus been broken many other M.P.s plunged into the swim and finally the Government, shorn of Margesson and the younger Grigg, made further concessions in pay and allowances for all the Services.

Let his enemies say what they like, C-R bore the heat and burden of the battle on behalf of the Services, and they have to hand it to him for the persistence with which he pioneered their cause in Parliament. Try as soured M.P.s and others may to belittle his achievement—and the Press never once gave him credit for it—the result of his doggedness cannot be brushed aside. It stands in black and white for all who care to see in the pages of the *Official Reports*.

To pull off a major stroke of this kind, either individually or as the originator of a concerted agitation, is not easy in the House of Commons even in normal times. In wartime the difficulties are both multiplied and magnified, for the remonstrant individual has not only to contend against the cry of "embarrassing the Government" but is faced by a combination of parties all of which abound with Members anxious to appear on their very best behaviour before a Coalition Government which has supreme jurisdiction over the distribution of the prizes. C-R and those supporting him were up against the most job-ridden Parliament of modern times—almost a third of the Members holding or being associated with some office great or small. That was the real reason why it took so long to get even a partial recognition of Servicemen's claims. When a Government holds so many M.P.s in thrall it is almost impossible to force a division with any reasonable chance of success. In these circumstances C-R had to rely on guerilla tactics, for the docility of the majority ruled out all possibility of a mass attack. What he did says much for his knowledge of parliamentary procedure and his skill in exploiting it. Since entering the Commons for Warrington in 1922 he had evidently made himself familiar with most of the tricks. To succeed against all the obstacles thrown in his way he needed to be familiar with them. Just how far the Whips subsequently went in their attempts to gag him will be seen later.

TO plead for those unable to plead effectively for themselves has always been the surest road to official dislike. The history of Britain abounds with examples. Pym got jailed for protesting against autocratic taxation and Place earned jeers for demanding reform of the franchise. Others have suffered manifold inflictions for advocating other reforms. The Member for Marylebone got into trouble because he championed the claims of the fighting Forces. But this was only one facet of the dispute which brought him under the frown of established authority. It was the war itself that had opened C-R's eyes to the larger issues. Why, he asked on many occasions, had the country been plunged into war utterly unprepared? And why, having got into it, was there so little evidence of the pundits' ability to wage it successfully?

C-R was not alone in criticising official incompetence. Others, though very few in number, share the credit for the frequent changes brought about in high quarters. Without those changes the war in Europe would have been protracted far longer than it was. The trouble was that the changes were not sufficiently far-reaching, and the reason for that was the continued dominance of the gang who had bungled the peace. C-R fell upon them furiously just after the Government reconstruction effected in March 1942. This reconstruction seemed to have impressed nearly everyone except C-R who was by no means satisfied. In a short blistering speech he told the House why.

"This much-heralded reconstruction of the Government as a whole appears to be a snare and a delusion," he said. "There are only two changes that have any worth-while significance. If Sir Stafford Cripps had been left out, there would have been serious trouble. And the same applies if Capt. Margesson had been left in. As to the remainder, it is enlightening to discover that the old Baldwin-cum-Chamberlain gang still hang on to nearly half the offices and this in spite of the much-boasted reconstruction, which is proving to be nothing more or less than a political optical illusion. This war is being largely conducted by those who are capable of thinking only in terms of the last war. I admit that a few 'yes-men' have been dropped from the Government but what is the good of that when in their places have been put 'yes-yes-men'?"

Remarking how the influence of the Whips' Office was more apparent than ever, C-R continued: "The bulk of the new

appointments go to the Conservatives. I have had considerable research made into all their recent political records. Can it be just a coincidence that every one of these new Ministers has either had sealed lips for an indefinite period or if they have opened their lips in this House it has only been for the purpose of emitting a little timid cooing ? ”

Instancing the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply, he went on : “ In his last speech as a back-bencher Mr. Charles Peat said ‘ I have been loyal to my leaders ever since I have been in Parliament, perhaps blindly loyal, perhaps wrongly loyal, but at any rate loyal.’ One cannot help but notice that Mr. Peat, who had been so loyal to Baldwin and Chamberlain, was brought into the Government within six weeks of making that remarkable affirmation.”

It was a neat point and while the House relished it C-R continued : “ I am all for the right sort of loyalty, but how about the efficient strong-willed men inside and outside Parliament who have dared to criticise their leaders when they considered it necessary in the best interest of the nation to do so ? Surely loyalty to the country comes before loyalty to any leader ? Have any of these men been brought into this reconstructed Government at this desperate time when only men of guts and ruthless ability should be required ? ”

The answer was obvious on the Front Bench. No such men had been included, with the sole exception of Sir Stafford Cripps, who, C-R observed, could not be left out because he had an exceptional measure of confidence among the ordinary people. C-R then mentioned twenty well-known men of proved ability who might well have replaced some of the ramshackle collection of party hacks. While he was going through his list of recommendations Sir Percy Harris interjected, “ What about you ? ” To which C-R retorted : “ I do not mind saying that even I would be better than many members of the present Government.” He need not, said M.P.s afterwards, have been so self-deprecatory about it, for there was scarcely a man on the Front Bench with whom any ordinarily competent M.P. need have feared to measure himself. C-R ended by characterising the new Government with the exception of Churchill as “ a collection of Cripps and pieces,” but recalling that Cripps was about to depart on a mission to Moscow, added “ now it is just pieces.”

As usual, this speech, which thoroughly annoyed the Government supporters, was ignored by the newspapers. Among the men of appropriate calibre he had mentioned was W. J. Brown, Secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association and one-time the Labour Member for Wolverhampton. Brown had broken

with the MacDonald Government in 1931 and for ten years had been out of Parliament. He came back with a bang just after C-R's blistering attack, as Independent Member for Rugby, where C-R had helped him to win Captain Margesson's old seat in a by-election. Neither the Tories nor the Labourites were anxious to welcome a man who had crashed the wartime electoral truce, but the Tories were even more displeased that he had captured one of their safe seats. To add to their fury C-R formally introduced him to the House.

This was the last straw as far as the Tory Whips were concerned. By the end of the week they had expelled C-R from the Party. "Goodness knows why they didn't do it long ago," he said.

Commented the *Evening Standard* diarist: "The Conservative Party has withdrawn the Party Whip from Captain Cunningham-Reid, M.P. for Marylebone. This means he is now in name what he has long been in fact, an Independent." And the diarist gave scope to what he called his "poetic correspondent's" observations:

"Once the Captain became quite abusive
At the Tory Party machine,
For he felt that it wasn't conducive
To keeping the Party clean.
Once elusive himself, now exclusive,
When Man and Machine come to grips
The Captain finds nothing elusive
About the Will-o'-the-Whips."

Then occurred one of the coolest political counter-strokes known for many a long day. It will be recollected that in 1940 after his return from America, C-R's true-blue Conservative organisation had, by piling abuse on misrepresentation, secured a majority and asked him to resign his seat. He had refused, but they nevertheless proceeded to select Sir John Fitzgerald, Baronet, as his successor. From then onwards C-R had no say in the running of that organisation, but was still a member. One of the rules stated that 25 members of the Union might at any time require the Secretary to call a Special General Meeting of the Union. Backed by his remaining supporters in the Union, C-R took advantage of the rule. A Special General Meeting was convened for the purpose of asking the Union to repudiate Sir John Fitzgerald and to pass a vote of confidence in himself—the man they had rejected two years ago and whom the Conservative Party had rejected two weeks ago! C-R was hitting back with a vengeance.

Describing the incident some time later W. J. Brown said: "The Captain, having recently been expelled from his Party,

for reasons which redound to his credit, with commendable audacity straightaway took the war into the enemy's camp in his constituency and coolly demanded that he should be given a vote of confidence and that the worthy baronet should be thrown out on his ear. The local Party pundits were derisive about what they called 'such futile impertinence' but, being confident of the outcome, placed no difficulty in the way of the matter coming up at a General Meeting. The flutterings in this official dove-cote were, I believe, pitiable, when, in spite of everything they could do, the Captain, having fought these beasts of Ephesus for two hours and a quarter in the venerable hall called 'Wigmore,' was finally given a vote of confidence by the shrewd rank and file. His political conduct was thus officially approved, and the prospective services of the Knight of Kerry were ignominiously dispensed with."

Here is the *Evening Standard's* entertaining description of the end of that extraordinary meeting :

" 'Whatever is the matter?' asked an old gentleman last night when he got off the bus opposite the Wigmore Hall. A tumult of booing and hissing was being directed by a crowd outside that famous concert hall towards an elderly man who was making a retreat. Then the booing turned to cheers for a handsome youngish man who was standing amidst the crowd.

" 'The matter, sir,' I explained, 'is this. Those are members of the St. Marylebone Conservative & Constitutional Union celebrating a vote of confidence in Captain Cunningham-Reid, M.P., which he won by five votes. The gentleman over there who was booed is Sir John Fitzgerald. By the same five votes he has lost his position of prospective candidate.'

" 'Politics,' said the old gentleman. 'I see.' "

So C-R was left sitting pretty in a nest that had been built up by the Tories since 1867. It is difficult, though, to reconcile C-R's independent attitude with the name of the organisation that backs him—the St. Marylebone Conservative & Constitutional Union. This is how he explained it in 1944 :

" This Union takes an independent political line, and is in no way tied to the official Conservative Party. It approves wholeheartedly my support of Winston Churchill, and of all that is good in Conservatism, but it also approves my opposition to the harmful practices of the Conservative Party machine and my contention that an M.P.'s first duty and main loyalty is to his constituents."

The rejection of Sir John Fitzgerald and the confirmation of the sitting Member was a nasty blow for the caucus. But what

they failed to achieve in the established organisation they could do without opposition in their own rival establishment. This was the Conservative Association, which they had set up to run Sir Basil Blackett against C-R in 1932. On a number of occasions this rival body had assumed the appearance of death, and more than once most of its sponsors had returned to the original Union. Following the Union's snap election of Sir John in 1940, the rival Association might really have died had it not been revived again by the Union's latest decision in favour of C-R. So, prompted by defeat, the caucus skedaddled once more from the Union, and got the half-moribund Association going again.

HOLIDAYS WITH PAY !

SUMMARISING C-R's pilgrimage up to this point, it is clear he was paying a considerable price for his independence. In the course of his progress he had fallen out with his wealthy wife and her relations, with several Cabinet Ministers and the Government Whips, and now, as if for good measure, he had broken with the Conservative Party. For most people that would have been sufficient. But the Captain was apparently only just starting to get into his stride. His next effort successfully antagonised practically every one of his 614 colleagues in the Commons.

Having regard to the nature of the issue raised, their antagonism can be appreciated. It was nothing less than a proposal to reduce their parliamentary incomes. C-R was remonstrating against another prolonged recess. It was September, 1942, and the Commons had already had over four months' holiday in the previous twelve months.

The suggestion provoked such a storm that the Press was compelled to take notice, but again the headlines seized more on the froth than the substantial facts of the incident. Blazoned the *Daily Express* : " M.P.s Shout ' Honolulu ' to Cunningham-Reid." Others played up similar red-herrings. So once again the real story has to be sought in the files of the *Official Report*.

As Leader of the House, Sir Stafford Cripps had moved " That on the fourth sitting day the House do adjourn until (date secret)." Those were the days when there was great secrecy about where and when the Commons sat, although no one seemed to care much whether the large factories were effectively camouflaged or not. After Cripps, C-R got going, and there were some lively interruptions. Said C-R : " I desire to oppose the motion, and I do not know whether any Members of the House are likely to support my opposition. I want to draw the attention of the House to the statement that was made yesterday.

Mr. J. J. Davidson (Glasgow, Maryhill) : " On a point of order. In view of the discussion which has just transpired would you consider it within your power to ask the Leader of the House to be now present ? "

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : " That is not a point of order."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " I very much regret that the Leader of the House, at this stage, has found it necessary to

leave. What he said yesterday appears to have considerable bearing on the motion now before us."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir Kingsley Wood) : "Perhaps my hon. and gallant Friend will allow me to say that my right Hon. and learned Friend the Lord Privy Seal and other of his colleagues have had to go to an appointment."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "No doubt my right hon. Friend is in a position to reply on his behalf. This is the passage in his remarks to which I desire to draw the attention of the House, which I say has a considerable bearing on the Motion that is before the House. Yesterday he stated : 'I do not think that we can conduct our proceedings here with the dignity and the weight with which we should conduct them unless Members are prepared to pay greater attention to their duties in this House, which are just as great as the duties of men in the trenches at the Front.' In that somewhat wangling White Paper which was laid before the House the other day, it was pointed out that the average soldier receives the equivalent of £3 per week—a seven-day week. (*Interruption.*) If you will allow me, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, I am now coming to the relevant part. I do not know whether you, Sir, are aware that we Members of Parliament, after subtracting the holidays that we have already had this year —"

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : "The hon. and gallant Member is now going far beyond the terms of the Motion."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "You will correct me, Sir, if I am wrong, but surely the terms of the Motion are that we are to have another Recess. Therefore I want to point out to you that taking the Recesses we have already had, and adding the Recesses we are likely to get to the end of the year, on the basis of last year, it will work out that for every six days Members of Parliament have worked in this House they receive over £30, taking our remuneration at £600 a year. I would also point out that we receive that whether we work or not.

"To come to another point, at the end of this year, reckoning on the same basis, this House will have had over three months' holiday—[Hon. Members : "Honolulu."]—and we are the people whose solemn duty it is to look after the interests of the nation and to keep an eye on and spur the Executive. We shall have had three months' holiday this year, and yet in various ways we are exhorting the workers to have less leisure and at the same time to step up their working hours. This is a disgraceful state of affairs, especially in view of the fact that right hon. gentlemen who sit on the Front Bench opposite, when they go round the country, are never tired of telling people that we

have equality of sacrifice in this country. During the wartime crisis, Parliament should have no more holidays than the workers.

"The Leader of the House," went on C-R, ignoring the interruptions, "told the House at the beginning of the last Recess that one of the reasons why it was necessary to have a Recess was that Members of Parliament should be able to go to their constituencies and consult their constituents. [An Hon. Member : "Hear, hear."] An hon. Member sitting behind me says "Hear, hear" to that. I do not know whether he could prove to this House that during any of the Recesses we have had this year, half of the time was spent by him in parliamentary business in his constituency."

Mr. A. C. Reed (Exeter) : "If the hon. and gallant Gentleman wants to know, I have not even had a half-day during August that I have not been attending to my constituency, including the Bank Holiday, and doing work of the kind which has been mentioned. Nor, may I add, since the war, have I had a long trip abroad. I have not been away for months from this country."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I am indeed glad to hear how assiduous the hon. Gentleman has been in attending to his parliamentary duties, but I believe that if you were to take a census of all Members of Parliament, including myself" [Hon. Members : "Oh."]

Mrs. Tate (Frome) : "The hon. and gallant Member must remember that some of us have constituencies which want us to represent them."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I should like to point out to the hon. Lady that what she has implied is not borne out by an incident which took place in my constituency not so long ago, when I was given a vote of confidence. If I remember aright, that is not quite what happened to the hon. Lady some time ago in her own constituency. If we in this House are to go on with these continual Recesses and do not show an example to the country of hard work, we should at least show an example to the country in national economy, and therefore I think that it would be only right and proper, considering how little work we have to do now [Hon. Members : "Oh."]—if we would agree to have our parliamentary salary cut down to £200 a year. I think that for war purposes that would be more than sufficient."

Deputy-Speaker : "The question of cutting down salaries does not arise on this Motion."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "Let me then say this. If no parliamentary reform is forthcoming and if we are to continue

to have these constant Recesses, I believe it would be far better, as we are unable to put our house in order, to dissolve Parliament completely for the duration of the war. I think that would be better than this increasing mockery and discrediting of democracy."

Deputy-Speaker: "The hon. and gallant Member must confine himself to the terms of the Motion, and these relate solely to the question of the Adjournment."

Mr. Logan: "Would it be possible for you, Sir, to explain to the hon. and gallant Gentleman what is the subject of discussion?"

Captain Cunningham-Reid: "I agree that what I have had to say may not have been very pleasant to some hon. Members, but I, for one, think that democracy is becoming thoroughly discredited in this House."

Deputy-Speaker: "If the hon. and gallant Member proceeds on those lines, I shall have to order him to resume his seat."

Captain Cunningham-Reid: "Having made my protest against these continual Recesses and against the little interest that is taken in parliamentary affairs in this House—[Hon. Members: "By whom?"] let me say this. I believe that, in the present circumstances, rather than continue to discredit Parliamentary institutions and the cause of democracy, it would be better if we were to do away with this farce and, for the war period, have a full-blooded though benevolent Churchillian dictatorship."

The protest notwithstanding, the 600-odd M.P.s took their prolonged holiday and kept their £600 a year. Some, being in uniform, took Service pay as well. Parliament at that period was rapidly earning the contempt of all intelligent observers. The outstanding characteristics of the Commons were indolence and servility. Without protest, and often with enthusiasm, they conscribed and controlled the mass of people but in many respects stood above these regulations themselves. Their nominal working time was three days a week, except for rare occasions, when they worked four. Eighteen hours a week was the usual run—for those who took the trouble to attend. Many were absent for weeks on end, and the few who attended all sittings for the full eighteen hours a week could have been counted on one hand. Allowing for the frequent Recesses—they objected to calling them holidays—they put in about 120 days a year (those who were not absentees), while they subscribed to regulations which made other men and women work up to 60 hours a week for more than 300 days a year. On top of that they virtually

exempted themselves from military conscription and, for the most part, left other people to do the firewatching at the Commons.

Following C-R's scathing condemnation of such supine conduct, the *Daily Mail* said :

“Cut M.P.s to £200 a Year, says Member.”

“Captain Cunningham-Reid, Independent M.P. for Marylebone, impressed on the House of Commons yesterday that he wanted it to be a pattern of zeal to the country.

“It was as the acid opponent of any further holidays for the House just now that Captain Cunningham-Reid stood forth.

“So indignant was he at the Government's proposal that a further short recess should follow the present series of sittings that he stole the spotlight from more humdrum M.P.s who talked about the same thing.”

“A strange chorus of ‘Honolulu,’ a lot of laughter, and what appeared to be some ironic comment from his fellow M.P.s did not put him off.

“M.P.s, he laid down, should have no more holiday than the ordinary workers. If the House could not set the country an example of hard work, the least M.P.s could do was to have their salaries cut down to £200 a year.”

The *D. M.* further gave vent to this apt bit of doggerel :

“The working man who gets up late
Or is an absentee
We can by law incarcerate—
Not so with an M.P.
And people who accept a fee
For jobs they fail to do
Are jailed for fraud. But, dear M.P.,
This can't apply to you !
Democracy, observe your best—
Observe your perfect sample—
In precept strong, and in behest,
But never in example.
The Sinner, when he's brought to book,
In shame and silently
Accepts the Judge's sharp rebuke—
Not so with an M.P.
When other people go on strike
The House creates a fuss,
But they can do just what they like—
You mustn't question us !

Were faults confessed, I do not doubt
We'd let them be forgotten,
But when you grouse because found out
Well, gents . . . it's pretty rotten."

This is what the *Bulletin and Scots Pictorial* had to say about it: "Despite the attempts by Members yesterday to gag him, a good many people outside Parliament will agree with Captain Cunningham-Reid's criticism of M.P.'s too lengthy holidays, which tend to discredit Parliament in the eyes of the workers. Three months' holiday, he holds, is too much. M.P.s are notable critics, but are extraordinarily thin-skinned when any word or reproach is uttered against them. Note not only the reception accorded Captain Cunningham-Reid's remarks but the peevishness displayed by members over Sir Stafford Cripps's rebuke to the Commons the day before, when half a dozen Members were all that remained to carry on the debate."

Equally outspoken was the *Evening Star*: "Many Members of Parliament who as a rule show no hesitation in seizing opportunities for criticising others, are revealing themselves as remarkably thin-skinned when criticism is turned in their direction," said the *Star*. "And their reactions, to say the least, have been very injudicious. Their protests against the well-deserved rebuke administered by the Leader of the House, Sir Stafford Cripps, on Tuesday only served to place those at fault in worse light. As if this were not enough, they immediately proceeded to give an exhibition of undignified behaviour which could not have been more ill-timed. The scenes in the House when Captain Cunningham-Reid was opposing a motion for a further recess merit only one description—disgraceful. The Members may still have been smarting under Sir Stafford Cripps's 'caning' and their conduct may have been excited to some extent by long-standing prejudices against Captain Cunningham-Reid, but the Members were extremely unwise to indulge in unseemly levity when he was expressing views concerning the work and remuneration of M.P.s, with which many of their constituents are in sympathy."

Between them Sir Stafford and C-R had given their colleagues a much merited rebuke. Attendance in the following week showed that it had not been without effect. It also showed, as did the support given him by a few newspapers, that C-R had to be taken notice of, despite the sneers of the self-interested cacklers. Just as he had forced the House and the Government to take some cognisance of Service claims, so now his persistence was beginning to make him a force in other directions. Just after his attack on the privilege-seeking work-shirking M.P.s, in a debate on wages policy he offered some bold proposals for

giving real substance to "equality of sacrifice," the phrase with which M.P.s and Ministers were hoodwinking the multitude while grasping every possible advantage for themselves. It was one of C-R's best speeches and will well repay perusal.* The war (and the peace) would have weighed less heavily on the ordinary man and woman had his suggestions been adopted. But cutting across the vested interest in and about all the parties, as it did, this speech received practically no publicity. On this important issue he was again left to fight alone.

* See Appendix, page 264.

ASSAULT ON PRIVILEGE.

WAR'S first victim, it has been well said, is truth. When the guns begin to boom it is the business of governments to mangle the truth for the confusion of enemies and the consolation of friends. And the friends are further consoled by lurid prognostications of the vengeance to be wreaked on the enemies. So it was in World War 1, and it has been the same in World War 2. Those who remember the blather about hanging the Kaiser, the supposed world's worst warmonger, will also recall how he was allowed to live out twenty years of peaceful retirement in luxury at Doorne. Before Wilhelm was dead the cry had already risen about hanging Hitler. In the meantime the mass of ordinary people—British, French, German and the rest—had mourned their losses, while their rulers prepared for the next bloodbath.

Linked with the kindly sentiments concerning the future of the Fuehrer came fearful warnings as to the fate in store for his Continental associates. From the news and views disseminated from on high it would appear that if there were one creature worse than the Hun it was the Hun's underling. Many of these were of the socially superior ilk who had enjoyed and reciprocated the hospitality of British homes, and some were closely associated with British firms and families. They were the traitors, the quislings who had helped Hitler in his dastardly work of ruin. They deserved to die. And die they should! How they were hated in the froth of official fury. In those early days of World War 2 when belligerents and neutrals went down like ninepins before the all-conquering panzers there was no limit to officialdom's self-righteous frenzy. Crush the quislings! Shoot the rats! Those were the sentiments broadcast day and night by every agency of Allied propaganda.

With the example of the Kaiser so vividly before them, it is more amazing than amusing how easily the masses fell for it. Like the bulk of politicians who also fell, they displayed once more an incurable habit of mistaking the bark for the bite and were never more sanguinely inclined than when counting the corpses before they were dead. They had apparently yet to learn that despite the growling and the snarling dog does not eat dog.

That a few million wasted lives are as nothing between pals did not have to await demonstration till the end of World War 2. It was shown about as blatantly as could be in the third year

of the conflict. An outstanding example, one that might have met with popular disapproval—had the populace been allowed to know about it—was the lavish hospitality just then being showered upon one of Europe's most notorious quislings. He was none other than Prince Paul of Yugoslavia who, after permitting his country to be a hunting ground for the Nazis, had suddenly departed from Belgrade and, with his wife, Princess Olga, sister of the Duchess of Kent, somehow "fallen into British hands." A good deal was known about the matter in Fleet Street and Westminster at that time, but for reasons that may readily be imagined the newspapers made little mention of it. Nor did any M.P. other than the Member for Marylebone think it worthy of attention. Why the others chose to keep silent must also be left to the imagination.

After working up to the subject by a few preliminary skirmishes at Question Time, C-R at last got in with a veritable blitzkrieg on this prince of quislings. The following extracts from his speech make a revealing story.

"Prince Paul is justifiably recognised as a traitor to his country and to the Allied cause generally," he said, getting right down to the point. "He sold his brave country to the Germans, but the patriots of that country revolted against him and, to use the Prime Minister's own words, 'swept from power those who were leading them into a shameful tutelage.'" The quotation was from a statement by Premier Churchill on April 9th, 1941, when he denounced the whole bunch of Belgrade quislings, especially the Prince, and applauded the fight then, and long afterwards, put up by the Yugoslav patriots. C-R continued the record :

"They (the patriots) kept the Germans at bay for an invaluable six weeks, when this weak and contemptible Prince and his wife decided to get out while the going was good. And where did they go? Well, they did what anyone in like circumstances would do—they tried to get to their best friends. They tried to cross the frontier into Germany, but the Yugoslavs turned them back. Eventually they were handed over to the British authorities, who sent them to Kenya.

"The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who I am glad to see in his place, informed me a short while ago that as a political prisoner Prince Paul is required to live in a house set aside for him by the Kenya Government, that he has a police guard, and that he is under the surveillance of an administrative officer resident in the house. From that it would appear that he was being strictly guarded, and the reason was that he should not be able to see, hear or say things that could conceivably

assist his Axis masters. I think the House will agree that this was a procedure which was only right and proper.

"But what are such precautions worth when simultaneously the companion of this dangerous traitor, his wife, Princess Olga, who incidentally has a dominating character, is allowed to move about Kenya and this country, as a rule unaccompanied, just as she wishes, in a position to see, hear or say anything she likes? I hope when the Minister replies, he will not be reduced to sentimental excuses, because in a vital war such as this, privileged sentiment* is no excuse for taking any unnecessary risk that could quite possibly have a serious bearing on the whole trend of the war. I hope that this lady is more to be trusted than her husband. I hope her loyalties lie over here rather than in Kenya, or rather than with her other sister, who is married to a German, Count Toerring.

"Prince Paul, the traitorous rat, the Laval of Yugoslavia, is in every sense of the word basking in the sunshine of British Kenya, where he lives in a millionaire's house, entertains constantly, and goes big-game shooting. In fact he and his family are treated as trusted, and certainly favoured, British nationals.

"The Yugoslav Royal Palace at Cetinje is now a prison, and the man and his family who used to live there, and ought to be in prison there now, are being accorded a favoured freedom by the British. Even in this life-and-death struggle we do not seem able to shake off a dangerous snobbery that allows us apparently to lose our sense of values. Is this kind of thing an indication of things to come? When the day of retribution arrives, provided the culprit is sufficiently exalted, is he to get away with it?"

"The visit—I think an official one—which Prince Paul and Princess Olga made to Germany in 1939 was a triumphal progress. After a banquet given in honour of the royal guests, Hitler referred in a speech to both of them in fulsome terms. He especially welcomed to his country—I quote his words—'the gracious presence of Princess Olga, whose beauty has captured Berlin.' Bear in mind that the mother of the Princess was an exiled Russian Grand Duchess. Consequently, the Princess, as is well known, hates the Bolsheviks, and—very naturally, for that reason alone—has been drawn towards the Nazis, for they also hate the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, we, the British, are the friends of the Bolsheviks.

"To summarise the position, Prince Paul has from the very start shown a keen desire to collaborate with the Germans ;

* The Duchess of Kent, sister of Princess Olga, had recently been widowed.

and he did so. Princess Olga is his loyal wife ; and her sympathies were anyhow with the Germans because of her enmity towards the Bolsheviks, who had ill-treated her family. The Princess seldom came to this country, but was constantly in Germany. Her country house was adjacent to the German frontier, and very convenient for Berchtesgaden. The Princess has all along been in a unique position, for an outsider, of being *persona grata* within that very small inner Nazi circle that surrounds Hitler ; and, as is well known, she has been much flattered by them. She has a sister who lives in Germany and whose husband is a Nazi.

" In view of all these facts, is it not too much to expect of human nature that the Princess has suddenly renounced her past sympathies and all I have just mentioned and miraculously become a sincere loyal friend of this country ? We have deliberately brought this woman over to the British Isles, and have allowed her to all intents and purposes complete freedom. She has been in touch with officials in key war positions. Who knows that we may not by such an injudicious act have endangered the lives of countless soldiers, sailors and airmen ? What right have we to take a chance with the lives of our fighting men by giving these fantastic privileges to a dangerous Royal enemy ? Is she to be allowed to return to Kenya by way of Portugal, which, as we know, is bristling with Nazi agents—old friends of the Princess, no doubt.

" These are grave questions, and the repercussions can be equally grave. I trust, therefore, that the Minister, when he replies to these allegations I have made and the questions I have asked, will not shelter behind a smoke-screen of sentiment, sentiment which all our hearts would desire to respond to, but which, nevertheless, must not divert our heads from also considering the security of our fighting men and the nation as a whole.

" There are even more serious aspects of this case that should be investigated. They are of a more personal character and could prove much more distressing. I have to-day deliberately refrained from dealing with such aspects, and I trust that my restrained attitude on this extraordinary incident will be shown to be appreciated by my being given in return straight answers to my questions, so that I shall not be forced to pursue on quite different lines what is, I believe, an astonishing official blunder."

From the wide-eyed surprise registered on the back benches C-R was evidently telling some of the Members something they did not know. The Front Bench was obviously better informed, and judging by the official reply, had come fully prepared to whitewash the Quisling while applying another dose of tar to

the troublesome man from Marylebone. Having asked for straight answers to straight questions, here is what C-R got from Richard Law, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs :

"I do not really see why the hon. and gallant Member troubled the House with his speech because any one of us could have got exactly the same thing by tuning in to 'Lord Haw-Haw' . . . he represented Prince Paul as being a kind of ravenous tiger who, if he was not kept in a cage, might overthrow the whole of the Allied Powers. The fact is that Prince Paul is a weak man who would never overthrow anyone, who would never be a danger to anyone . . . he was put in Kenya because it was thought better to have him out of the area ; because if he had been in that area, being, not a strong man, but a weak man, he might, without meaning it, have been used as a pawn by the Axis Powers."

Law went on to say in reference to Princess Olga that C-R had attacked a defenceless woman, and that he felt sure if the country had been consulted it would have approved of Princess Olga's coming. "Had the country been consulted" was a rich bit of irony. It was clear from the issue-dodging nature of the reply that the Government was much upset at C-R's letting the country know anything about it.

That the scandalous episode was keenly felt by others besides C-R was indicated by the *Evening Standard* diarist's comment on Law's reply : "I confess that I find this statement incomprehensible, or at least irrelevant. Weak though Prince Paul may have been, it remains a fact that he *was* a danger. He opened the gates to the Germans, and Yugoslavia, in Mr. Churchill's words, only saved her soul by revolting against him. It was too late to repair all the damage. Many Yugoslav, Greek and British patriots were killed because of his disloyalty to the cause of the United Nations."

Undismayed by Law's offensiveness, C-R, returned to the attack next day, and asked the following pertinent questions :

"(1) Is the traitor Prince Paul, who is a political prisoner in Kenya, allowed on occasions to go about by himself? (2) whether Princess Olga, like her husband, is also a political prisoner and, if not, why not? (3) How is Princess Olga's arrival in this country reconciled with the fact that the Government have made a strict rule that no foreigner should be allowed into this country unless our direct national interests justify such a course? (4) On similar compassionate grounds, would the same facilities to come to this country be given to an ordinary loyal British woman residing in Kenya as have been given to the Royal wife of a foreign enemy of this country?"

He was just getting into proper stride when Parliamentary finesse once more brought him to a halt. At this he appears to have rushed off to a printer, for the following day the unspoken part of his speech was circulated to every M.P. Commented the *Daily Telegraph*: "Captain Cunningham-Reid has adopted the unusual course of reprinting *Hansard* up to the point where he was stopped and adding the remainder of the speech he was unable to deliver"—but it did not publish the speech.*

Naturally, the Government maintained a discreet silence. Not so C-R. Week in, week out, he pursued the Front Bench on the topic. On one occasion he switched the attack to the Home Secretary and after receiving a negative reply to a request for visas for two Jewesses to get to safety who had escaped to France from Germany, asked angrily: "Why exclude these two unfortunate people and yet make an exception in the case of the wife of a traitor? I am referring to Princess Olga of Yugoslavia. May I have an answer?" None was forthcoming.

"M.P. SHOUTED DOWN" was the *Evening News* heading after another occasion when C-R had asked Foreign Secretary Eden why Prince Paul had been allowed to leave Kenya and live in South Africa. Eden replied that the Prince had been removed to South Africa on medical grounds. The Government had been advised by the Prince's doctors that his health would suffer serious and permanent injury if he remained in Kenya. But C-R was not going to leave it at that, and demanded to know at whose original request the Prince had gone from Kenya to South Africa, and, if it was at his own request, since when had political prisoners, especially such traitorous ones as this, been allowed at their own request to go to another country? He had got as far as "such traitorous ones" when the clamour arose. There was no reply from the Government, and Commander Locker-Lampson—the Member for Handsworth, Birmingham—announced that he wished to protest against "this abuse of parliamentary time."

It is indicative of public feeling on the question—once C-R had made it known—that Hannen Swaffer, fearless critic of bumbledom in all its forms, denounced in *The People* "these subtle moves to bolster up Fascism" and demanded to know "Why M.P.s jeered at Cunningham-Reid when he asked why Prince Paul had been allowed to leave Kenya, where he had been feted, for South Africa? Have the Commons forgotten how Paul handed over Yugoslavia to the Nazis? Or is a man allowed to do that sort of thing because he is a prince?"

* It is given in the Appendix, page 267.

Had C-R wanted to be nasty he could have exploited the official solicitude for Prince Paul to hurl back Sir Edward Grigg's former "treachery" allegation to a more appropriate quarter. Maybe he was content to have exposed the solidarity which always prevails among the ruling coteries even across the chasm of war. Far from dog eating dog, the international pedigree pack invariably manage to make the most of the hunt together. As far as the fraternity of cosmopolitan rulers are concerned the burden of war is borne by the mongrels cribbed and trained in the national kennels.

Shortly after this onslaught on the Yugoslav quisling, the Member for Marylebone gave another courageous exhibition of his disregard for the exalted. Following the death of Mr. Speaker Edward Algernon Fitzroy, the Commons assembled in force on March 9th, 1943, to elect a new Speaker. Next to the King, the Speaker is one of the most important personages in the country, and his election, conducted with traditional ritual, is an impressive ceremony. The House is full, the galleries overflowing with peers and peeresses, the Diplomatic Corps and other distinguished or otherwise privileged "strangers." The Speaker's ornate chair is empty at such times, and as there is no Speaker to call the turn of Members, the function, as from immemorial practice, devolves upon the bewigged and titled Clerk at the Table. But not being Mr. Speaker he is not allowed to speak, so instead of calling by name any particular Member to address the House he rises and points at him. By ancient custom the Prime Minister acquaints the Members that His Majesty has given them leave to choose another Speaker. After that two especially chosen Members in solemn tones propose and second the new Speaker (who has already been selected behind the scenes). A few more formalities, and the proposer and seconder approach the Speaker-Elect, who is sitting in his customary place in the House, and drag him to the Speaker's Chair. At this stage Mr. Speaker-Elect has to assume a reluctant and humble air, and with bowed head make a pretence of holding back.

On this occasion Colonel Clifton Brown was being elected. Everything had gone swimmingly up to the point where the seconder had finished his speech. Then—to quote the *Evening Standard*—"it was at this stage that Captain Cunningham-Reid decided to hurl a spanner into the works." He stood up, and as no other Member had risen, Sir Gilbert Campion, the learned Clerk at the Table, had to point to him. C-R then proceeded to create another sensation, taking it upon himself, the only Member out of 615, to oppose the election of a Speaker. For nearly half an hour, without a note of any kind, he addressed an amazed and exasperated assembly. There was nothing they could do to stop him. There was nobody in the Chair to keep order.

Had they tried to shout him down he would in all probability have gone on all the longer, so they just sat muttering or intervening from time to time with angry ejaculations. This is what he said :—

“ This is one of the necessary constitutional formalities of this House, but I maintain that the new Mr. Speaker was chosen last week. It appeared in the Press that the Conservative Party had decided that Colonel Clifton Brown should be the Speaker of this House. I would remind those official functionaries in the Conservative Party that there are other Members of this House besides official Conservatives, and, to put it mildly, I do think that it would have been courteous on an occasion such as this if every Member of this House had been previously consulted. After all, this is not a matter which concerns only the Government. It concerns the rights and privileges of individual Members.

“ This is one of those rare occasions in the history of Parliament when we find ourselves without a Speaker, and therefore it is one of those refreshing occasions when certain things can be said which could not be said at other times when observations might be considered disrespectful to the occupant of the Chair. At present there is no occupant of that Chair.

“ But it is not for reasons such as that that I am rising to oppose the election of Colonel Clifton Brown as Speaker. I should like to say at the outset that Colonel Clifton Brown may prove a most admirable Speaker ; in fact, I have no doubt that when he is elected, as elected he will be, he will prove to be an excellent occupant of that Chair in every way. I even go further, and I say that Colonel Clifton Brown, together with the hon. and gallant Member for South East Leeds (Major Milner) who had only a firefly existence as Deputy-Chairman, have in the past been two occupants of that Chair who have at any rate shown fairness to certain minorities in this House.

“ I would draw attention to the fact that I am not opposing Colonel Clifton Brown for any personal reason but am doing it because of a principle. The principle is this : This House of Commons is supposed to be the fountainhead of democracy. There are about 615 Members, all of whom are equal, or are supposed to be equal, inasmuch as each one is representative of certain sections of the community. They are all supposed to have equal constitutional rights when it comes to representing the views of their constituents and their own views within this House. I defy any right hon. or hon Member of this House, in spite of what has been said by the seconder of the Motion, to get up in his place and prove to the satisfaction of this House that every Member has on all occasions, should he desire, an

equal opportunity of addressing the house. Hon. Members know perfectly well that that is not so. [HON. MEMBERS : "No."] If there is any doubt about that, let me—[An HON. MEMBER : 'Why are you speaking now?'] Why am I speaking now? Because there was no other Member who rose.

"Let me remind hon. Members of what occurs in any ordinary Debate. First of all, there are all those hon. and right hon. Gentlemen, whose number is legion, who are ex-Ministers from past Governments. In all probability they were dud Ministers in dud Governments. [HON. MEMBERS : "Oh."] In all probability they were inefficient; but the fact remains that, by ancient custom in this House, Mr. Speaker invariably gives those Members priority over others. I notice that there is no dissent about that statement. I go further, and remind the House of that list of Members that the official Government Whips desire shall be called and which is given to Mr. Speaker, either in writing or verbally. I agree that it cannot be suggested that Mr. Speaker does not have a complete option as to whom he calls, but it is unfortunate and somewhat significant that practically on all occasions every Member on that list is called. What it comes to is this, that speakers as a whole in this House are not chosen by Mr. Speaker but are chosen by the official party Whips. I would go so far as to say that there is a growing feeling in the country that Speakers in the past have been looking after the interests of the Government, feeling that that was their function rather than looking after the interests of individual Members. [HON. MEMBERS : "Shame."]

"Those people who seldom get called in this House are those Members who cannot bring to bear the influence of great party machines, who cannot get on any lists. Is it a mere coincidence that those minorities who cannot bring to their aid any privilege are the ones who very often are not called? [Interruption.] There is a certain amount of dissent. I am not surprised. And in consequence I draw the attention of the House to just one example. Take the other day, on the Address in reply to the King's Speech. Sir Richard Acland, leader of the Common Wealth Party [Interruption]."

At this point one Member—believed to have been the playful octogenarian Will Thorne—tried to relieve his exasperation by blowing a whistle. There was scope here for an acid reference to the toy-strewn predilections of some ancient democrats, but gallantly refraining, when the commotion had died down, G-R gently reproved the old gentleman's inclination to usurp the rights of the Chair and calmly continued :

"As I was saying, the leader of Common Wealth desired to draw attention to a policy, and he somewhat optimistically

circulated certain Members of this House asking that in the event of being called they would, if in the purlieu of the House, do him the kindness of coming to listen to what he had to say, that it might be of interest to them, and that he would like to have their reactions. Whether he was wise in doing that or not, I am not prepared to say. [An HON. MEMBER: "He got reactions."] He did not; he was not called. He got no reactions. That is my point.

"For three days he tried to put his views before this House. He wanted to try out his views on Members, to have his policy debated, and I think that this was the right and proper place to do it. As it was, he not being a member of a large political party, not being able to bring to bear any privileges or priorities, and like some of us, not being too popular in this House—[Interruption]—those who have something to say in these matters saw to it that he was not called during the whole of those three days. Therefore, though I do not share the political views of the hon. Baronet, I nevertheless admire him for the strength of his convictions. As you did not allow him a hearing in this House he proceeded to go to the country, which I think you will agree he has done with some success* ; and the very people who were instrumental in preventing him from speaking in this House are the same people who to-day are the most apprehensive about his actions in the country. What I am saying is that if he had been allowed to speak and express his views—and, after all, this House, like Hyde Park, is supposed to be a safety valve of democracy—very likely that menace, as it is now considered by the officials of the Government, would not be so acute."

C-R then referred to what he called "the much lesser example" of the gag repeatedly applied to himself and told how he too had been compelled to seek the ear of the country by other than Parliamentary means. He had in fact done so by publishing three volumes of political dynamite in quick succession. Then, still holding up the proceedings, he turned from the critical to make a constructive suggestion. "I suggest that the practices of Mr. Speaker in the past have to a large extent been abrogated by others, and I feel the time has come when we should do what is done in some other Parliaments, where fairness prevails in the calling of speakers to take part in Debates. In some Parliaments speakers are called by ballot, and we already have that precedent in this House. We already ballot for the opportunity of introducing Motions. Why should there not be a ballot for the opportunity of addressing this House in Debates?"

"The procedure would be that all those who desired to speak, other than the Government speakers of the day, would submit

*Common Wealth had won two seats at by-elections.

their names to the Clerk at the Table, and when it came to an opportunity for Members of the House to take part the Clerk at the Table, just as on previous occasions, would withdraw a name from those submitted to him, and that would be the first speaker, other than a Government spokesman, and so on through the Debate. I think the argument against that—I can see Members on the front Bench smiling—is that if there was any speaker that the House particularly desired to hear, possibly a specialist on a particular subject, it might be that because he had not won a place, the House would not have the benefit of his special knowledge. That is a fallacious argument, inasmuch that it could quite well happen that if all who had asked to speak could not be called in the time available, the Government could extend the already very short time that is given to Debates and so enable every Member desiring to speak to take part.

"I am therefore led to say this : I would ask right hon. and hon. Members to exclude from their minds just for one moment any prejudicial thoughts and to approach this matter as if they were Members who were seldom able to attract the Speaker's eye. A great number of Members have only to stand up, and they know they will be called. Therefore, I would ask those Members to consider those who are not so fortunate. Has not the time come when we should be ahead of democracy instead of being pushed from behind ; when we should move with the times, and when every representative of the people of this country should have a fair and equal opportunity of representing his or her views, because as things are now, as our procedure goes, especially as regards the calling of speakers, this House of Commons is becoming a mockery of democracy."

There was much in that statement which many M.P.s would have applauded but for the fear of incurring the wrath of the Whips. As usual the Press, though more prone now than formerly to take notice of the Member for Marylebone, gave little space to it. Those that did mention it placed the emphasis on the "sensational" method he had chosen to get it across—deliberately overlooking the fact that he could not have done so under ordinary circumstances. "Members admired his courage, even if they deplored his taste—and possibly courage is the more desirable quality," commented the *Evening Standard*. "Great self-assurance was needed to act as he did," said the *Birmingham Post*.

There are times when if the true interests of democracy are to be properly served the trimmings of good taste must be subordinated to the superior demands of principle. As indicated by his opening remarks C-R was fully conscious of the violence he might be offering to a solemn occasion, but the protest had

to be made when opportunity offered. That it was appreciated in the proper place was made manifest next day when he was called upon early to speak in the debate on the Navy Estimates, and that he appreciated the response was shown by his prefacing his remarks with "congratulations to Mr. Speaker on his elevation to high office and good wishes for his success." The result of the episode was doubtless to establish Marylebone's Member in better relations with the Chair.

PLEADING FOR THE LOWLY.

C-R'S progress did nothing to dispel the hostile attitude of the more hide-bound Conservatives. Angered by his continual flouting of the Party to the point of expelling him, they were further enraged by his attack on Prince Paul, an attack which he had carried through despite their utmost efforts to prevent him and which had not concealed their own complicity in the matter. Consequently, they maintained their obstructive tactics whenever possible, regardless of whether C-R was attacking the great or defending the small. An instance of the latter kind arose when he pleaded the case of an old man summarily dismissed after long service at the Ritz Hotel. The chance to air the grievance of a lone individual does not often arise in the Commons, but in this instance C-R seized an opportunity when the House was in Committee on the Catering Bill, a measure, sponsored by Ernest Bevin, which provoked quite a revolt among the supposedly progressive Young Conservatives who seemed to resent any official intercession on behalf of the workers engaged in what is notoriously admitted to be a sweated industry. This interlude is interesting, not only because of the tragic plight of the old man involved, but as showing how birds of a feather stick together when one of their number is put on the spot, and the technique required to overcome their obstruction. Here is the relative excerpt from C-R's speech in *Hansard* :

"Under this Clause any wages board will have the power to consider conditions of employment, such as the making of provision for employees of long service who have to retire through no fault of their own. When a board considers conditions of employment it should most certainly take into account the desirability of having superannuation schemes in certain circumstances. I think the Committee will agree that it is desirable to avoid a repetition of some present day conditions, where an employee can render valuable service in the same firm for most of his working life only to find himself up against it when he is too old to carry on.

"Such a state of affairs is more frequent than is generally known, and it is to be found in the most unlikely quarters. Let me give one example. A constituent of mine, aged 76, after 36 years' service in a luxury hotel was dismissed with a week's notice on the ground that he had been there too long. If his services had to be dispensed with because he was too old, that

is to some extent understandable, but what is not understandable is that after 36 years' faithful service he was given no bonus and no pension, not even a letter of thanks. The shock of his treatment has made him ill. But this poor old man cannot afford to be ill. The hotel to which I am referring is the Ritz Hotel, London. When this matter was brought to my notice my first act was to try to find out whether there was another side to the question. So, two months ago, I wrote to the Chairman of the Board of the Ritz Hotel. Since then seven letters have passed between us but no reason has yet been given why this constituent of mine has been treated in this mean manner. If there was good reason for so doing, why was I not told?"

Sir Stanley Reed (Aylesbury) : " On a point of Order. Has the correspondence between the hon. and gallant Member and the hotel manager anything to do with the question before the Committee?"

The Chairman : " I must ask the hon. and gallant Member to indicate in what way his remarks are related to the Question, ' that the Clause stand part of the Bill.' "

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " In my opening remarks, during which, Mr. Chairman, I believe, you happened to be talking, I explained the way in which they were connected."

Mr. Kirkwood (Dumbarton Burghs) : " Is not the hon. and gallant Member showing the need for the Clause?"

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " Yes, of course, that is the case. I am coming to that point in a moment. I am now trying to give an explanation to the Chairman. One of the main considerations in Clause 6 is the conditions of employment. The Minister said in his remarks to-day, that the wages board cannot be limited in the scope of its reports to the benefit of those that come under this Bill. I consequently hope that the board will consider the desirability in certain cases of instituting superannuation schemes to look after old employees. Therefore, I feel that I am justified in giving an example of why it is so necessary that this should be done in the future. If there had been some good reason for this man being dismissed there was no reason why the director of the Ritz Hotel could not tell me, even verbally, but it was not done."

Lieut.-Colonel Sir Thomas Moore (Ayr Burghs) : " On a point of Order. Can it be made clear whether indication was previously given to the Chairman of the Ritz Hotel, who is well known to be a Member of this House, that this point was to be raised so that he could be in his place to answer the charge and give the other side of the picture?"

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " I purposely had not mentioned that the chairman of the Ritz Hotel is a Member of this House, but as it has now been mentioned, it is only right that I should give particulars. This is the final letter which I wrote to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bracewell Smith)."

The Chairman : " The hon. and gallant Member is not entitled to read the letter. It is going far beyond the scope of the question. He is only entitled to give an illustration."

Major Petherick : " An attack has been made upon a Member of this House in the guise of criticism of a chairman of a public company, without the hon. Member in question having an opportunity of reply. What can be done in such circumstances, Mr. Chairman ? "

The Chairman : " No doubt, if necessary, the hon. Member concerned will find an opportunity to make a reply."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " I was not going to proceed with my reply, but now that you have given me that opportunity, Mr. Chairman, I will "

The Chairman : " The opportunity to which I referred was such as might be available to the hon. Gentleman to whom I understand the hon. and Gallant Member is making reference, and not to the hon. and gallant Gentleman himself.

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " I beg your pardon, Mr. Chairman. I hope you will allow me to say that of course I gave notice to the hon. Gentleman in question that I was raising this matter on this occasion, and I sent it by registered letter. [An HON. MEMBER : " That settles that."] It is suggested that in raising this matter I am doing something wrong and am attacking an hon. Member of this House, but I am doing nothing of the kind ; I am looking after the interests of one of my constituents, as it is my duty to do. It so happens that the matter coincides with what we are discussing to-day, and therefore I thought it only right and proper that, as this is an example of what we want to avoid in the future I should bring it up on this occasion. I should have liked, now that the name of the hon. Member has been brought up, in fairness to him, to divulge some of the correspondence, but I gather from you Mr. Chairman, that that would be going too far. Perhaps you will allow me to say this, that during all these intervening eight weeks, while seven letters have passed between us on no occasion has the reason been given why the man was treated in this manner."

The Chairman : " The present remarks of the hon. and gallant Gentlemen have no relation to the question before the Committee."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " As I have ventilated this man's grievance and at the same time shown the necessity for reform I feel satisfied as far as that is concerned. My only regret is that the hon. Member to whom I sent notice did not feel inclined to come along here to-day and give some answer."

What became of the old fellow who was cast so wantonly aside after spending half his life in ministering to the wealthy who patronise the Ritz few but C-R seemed to care. It is the habit of the catering trade, especially the more properous establishments, to sweat their employees almost to extinction and then throw them on the frigid mercy of public assistance—and at the same time let up a howl about the burden of the rates. In supporting the Catering Bill C-R was doing a service to a considerable section of his constituents apart from pleading the cause of a solitary old man. It is therefore understandable that the exposure won widespread approval, and not alone from those whose lot it had been or might be to endure the baselements of the Ritz but also from a few who were accustomed to enjoy the restaurant of that and similar luxury resorts. Those best acquainted with the Member approved his stand the more because of the generous consideration he had always shown his own household and secretarial staff, none of whom, it was said, had ever suffered financial want in consequence of age, incapacity or illness. The claim is supported by solid substance, a fact which goes a long way to account for his undoubted sympathy in the case under review as well as some other less publicised or deliberately unpublicised cases.

Six days after the Ritz episode C-R was back to his theme—conditions in the Forces. Speaking on the Army Act—which has to be endorsed annually by Parliament—he proposed the insertion of a new clause, and thus initiated a long and revealing debate. The speech, both challenging and humorous, demanded for Service folk the same political rights as civilians. He quoted Oliver Cromwell, who said : " A soldier must know what he fights for and love what he knows."

¶ " And I think," C-R went on, " he understood soldiers just about as well as anybody. Our men to-day are fighting in the fields, fighting in the skies and on the seas not only for survival but also for a better world, and that includes their home country. If we in this comfortable House commend that spirit and are grateful to them, why do we not prove it by allowing all ranks in the Services a fair say as to what they are fighting for ?

" The Army, in which there are more men than in the sister Services, has its political freedom governed by regulations that belong to the days when wars were a thing apart from the great mass of the people.

"The King's Regulations clearly indicate that there is a very real difference between the political liberty of the citizen and the political liberty of the citizen soldier. We have always claimed that we have free speech in this country and that there is no repression of political thought. This has always been considered to be a safety valve. It has been said that such freedom prevents political passion getting bottled up and developing into that extremism which can so easily lead, to anarchy and even to mutiny. If this be so, why are we such hypocrites, and at the same time, why are we so short-sighted, as not to extend to the soldier when off duty some of the political rights that he enjoyed before enlistment? If anyone has a stake in the future of this country, he has, and if we have a main obligation, it is to him.

"I have little doubt that some pundits in the War Office and class-conscious Colonel Blimps will exclaim that it is a shocking thing to contemplate that the common soldier should have access to political education; but no Minister of War, nobody representing the War Office, could possibly stand at that Box and sincerely say that if soldiers were allowed when off duty publicly to express their political views, their morale and fighting efficiency would be prejudiced. On the other hand, I think that any Minister would be proud to boast that whatever we Britishers do is freely entered into by the majority, that we are not a regimented country, that freedom of thought and freedom of speech are the very soul of our democratic institutions. But how could such a Minister having made such a boast, reconcile it with a denial to our citizen soldiers, sailors and airmen of the rights enjoyed by them yesterday and still enjoyed by their fellow citizens to-day who do not happen to be in the uniform of one of the Fighting Services? We pride ourselves in this country, and rightly so, of having thinking soldiers and not the Nazi robot type of soldiers, and yet we make it well-nigh impossible for soldiers to express publicly what they are thinking. Soldiers appreciate—and I want to make this point very clear—that it would lead to an impossible state of affairs if they were permitted openly to criticise Service matters. None of them makes such a demand. But they do resent that they are denied, when off duty, the right of publicly expressing an opinion about the shape of the new Britain for which they are asked to fight and die.

"The majority of those in the Services are not Regular Service men. This is a citizens' war. A large proportion of those who are in the Services happen to be people who were not in reserved occupations. In other words, they are just ordinary citizens. Having, though, got into the Services, they have discovered that they are at once at a disadvantage compared with those whom they left in civilian occupations. I should say that in fact they

are under a double, if not a treble, disadvantage. In the first place, there is the disadvantage of their having less pay. The pay and allowances of the average soldier are considerably less than the average income of an industrial worker. Secondly, there is the disadvantage of their having a greater chance than the industrial worker of being killed. I do not say that the industrial worker does not have every opportunity of being killed in air raids, but the ordinary soldier, especially in the Fighting Services, has not only air raids to contend with but the perils of active service. The third disadvantage is that they are not allowed in any circumstances publicly to express any political views when they are on leave.

"Soldiers may in certain circumstances write to the Press on political matters, but even though they are able to get by all the restrictions, I think they would be very lucky if their contributions were accepted by the Press. The fact remains, however, that they may in certain circumstances write to the Press. I ask hon. Members to look at the illogical situation which that brings up. A man in the Services may write certain political views to the Press and yet the same man is not allowed to express the same views by word of mouth. If he takes up a pen, that is all right, but if he wishes, when he is on leave, to get up on a platform at a political meeting in a small village and speak, that is not allowed. I think it will be agreed that that is an absurd, practically a Gilbertian, situation.

"While on this topic, assuming for the sake of argument that the Clause will be accepted and that those in the Services will be given an opportunity sometimes of saying publicly what they feel politically, let us assume further that there would crop up the question whether they should be allowed to do this while in uniform. There is quite a lot to be said on both sides, but I think there is more to be said for than against the contention that soldiers should be able to express political views while in uniform, because if one says that a soldier may take part in a public political discussion when he is on leave and if at the same time one says, 'But you must not wear uniform,' this would at once penalise the soldier. The average soldier has not any longer got any civilian clothing. He probably only had one suit, but by now it has either been pawned or is moth-eaten, or his wife or some other female dependant has cut it up for family purposes."

The Deputy-Chairman : "The hon. and gallant Member is getting very wide of the matter under discussion when he goes into the question of soldiers' old civilian clothes."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy-Chairman, but I hope you will allow me to discuss the

question whether a soldier should be allowed publicly to express his political views while wearing a uniform. If a man is not allowed to wear a uniform on such occasions, he would be very seriously penalised because the average soldier does not go about with a natty suit of gents' clothes in his rucksack. That being so, I suggest that if it were conceded that they should be allowed when on leave to take part in politics, but not while wearing uniform, it might very likely mean that ardent politicians in the Army, if they wanted to stand upon a platform and express political views, would have to do so in their underclothes, because they would have no other civilian clothes available."

The Deputy-Chairman : "The hon. and gallant Gentleman's remarks are relevant up to that point, but my Ruling is that the discussion must not be carried any further."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I want to make it clear that I am not in any way pressing this aspect of the matter, because I do not want to jeopardise the concession of my main request, which is so much more important.

"I am confident that other hon. Members feel as I do, that the time is long overdue when all members of the Services should not only have the right when off duty freely to write their political views but also freely to express their political views by word of mouth. Far from doing any harm, far from prejudicing military discipline, I feel that this would be much more likely to do the opposite by preventing dangerous frustrations. Millions in the Services are not allowed publicly to utter a word about the Atlantic Charter, the Beveridge Report, or the Prime Minister's recent pronouncement concerning a Four-Years Plan. Their views and hopes must not be openly expressed. When they put on uniform they put on a muzzle. I consider it is both immoral and un-British to gag them in this unnecessary and undemocratic manner. If we expect those who are doing the fighting for us to be maimed and killed, in justice we must allow them to have some say in what they are fighting for and what they are dying or."

The great majority of M.P.s—who, but for the sacrifice of the Service folk, might have been sitting less comfortably in a concentration camp—declined to agree with him. Unlike C-R, who thought with Cromwell that men fought best when they knew what they were fighting for, they preferred to sit in secure complacency protected by the slave-like ethic which denies the Forces the right to reason why, condemning them only to do and die.

PROPAGANDA AND PERVERSION

ONE of the weakest links in the British war administration is admitted on all hands to have been the misnamed Ministry of Information. Since the Government, like all belligerent governments, conceived it its duty to set up that Department for the delectation of friends and bedevilment of foes, it might at least have done the job properly. What it did in practice was to keep the home populace half-informed or uninformed and often misinformed, while leaving the Axis agencies virtually a free field to spread their peculiar brand of propaganda over almost all the rest of the world. When the files come to be searched and analysed in more peaceful times it will be found that the M.O.I. often let slip valuable items of news to the enemy but fell down badly when it came to winning the ear of neutrals, particularly America, who, after Russia entered the war, was the only neutral that mattered. The fact that the United States only joined the fray after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour—and the consideration that the Japanese had completely out-propaganded the British in Siam and Burma—is the final and indubitable answer to those who have tried to deny or excuse the conspicuous ineptitude of the M.O.I.

In charge of that Department in 1943 was burly bouncing Brendan Bracken, vigorously loquacious Conservative M.P. for Paddington North, one of Premier Churchill's blue-eyed boys, often entertainingly facetious but famed chiefly for the ferocity of his invective. It was said in the Lobbies that many M.P.s familiar with the M.O.I.'s woeful inadequacies hesitated to raise them from fear of his scorn. Be that as it may, in April 1943, C-R, who had already risked the fury of most Departments, returned to the problem of Anglo-American relations. In one of the most eloquent speeches of his career he refuted the anti-British charges then flooding the United States, showed what Britain had achieved in three and a half years of war and demanded to know why the Americans had been left unposted with the facts to off-set the Axis-inspired propaganda of the Isolationists. Informed and forthright, the speech was the first counter-stroke essayed by any M.P. and, properly reported, would have done much to allay the misunderstandings and suspicions so dangerously current in the United States. What happened was the usual perversion, the newspapers working apparently on the assumption that their first, if not their sole duty, was to smother the critic in an extensive report of the Minister's defence. Living

up to reputation, Bracken virulently distorted the criticism of his own Department as an unwarranted attack on America.

This is how the *Daily Telegraph* reported the debate :

“MR. BRACKEN TROUNCES M.P.s ‘SLIMY SPEECH.’”

“Capt. Cunningham-Reid, the member for Marylebone, received a public trouncing from the tongue of Mr. Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information, in the Commons to-day, such as has fallen on few members from Ministers.

“‘I want to make it quite clear,’ Mr. Bracken exclaimed heatedly, ‘that it is an extraordinary procedure on the part of an honourable member to come down here to-day equipped with a series of carefully distilled insults to the United States of America and boasting about his contacts in the U.S.A. I have better contacts, but they are not among the fashionables. Does he forget the American correspondents in London and the tales they told in the blitz?’ he demanded.

“‘I think he does,’ he went on, banging his fist on the despatch-box with a resounding crash, ‘because he was out of the country when the correspondents were sending their stories of the Battle of Britain.’

“‘I was out of the country at the request of a Government Department,’ retorted Capt. Cunningham-Reid.

“‘The honourable member has used rough language,’ rejoined Mr. Bracken. ‘I reply that the American correspondents in London were not beachcombing in Honolulu during the Battle of Britain.’

“He brushed aside Capt. Cunningham-Reid’s attacks on America and his jeers at their Press, saying that he had done Goebbels’ work. ‘Never, I think, has there been such a spectacle in the House of Commons.’

“He cited Raymond Gram Swing’s opinion that British propaganda in America was ‘just right.’

“Mr. Bracken suddenly tore his sheet of notepaper to shreds and declared as he threw them to the floor : ‘If I was to talk to our faithful servants in New York and elsewhere and tell them that they were praised by the hon. gentleman who has just made this slimy speech, they would be very much incommoded.’

“There was an uncertain cheer as Mr. Bracken sat down. Cries of protest followed when Capt. Cunningham-Reid, who had sat apparently unmoved, rose to ask a question.

“‘Is it not a fact that this ostrich-like tendency which has been observed in the Minister’s reply is typical of what is going on in the United States in our propaganda service?’ he asked.

"There were more protests, through which Captain Cunningham-Reid shouted in a vain endeavour to make himself heard. But before he could utter another word audibly the Speaker glanced at the clock and summarily ended the sitting."

For once at least the M.O.I. had provided news! Bracken had, of course, despite his lurid show of indignation, burked the issue. But he had not been able to refrain from reviving the thread-bare calumny of Honolulu and was not above trying to smear C-R with a variant of the former Grigg accusation—for "doing Goebbels' work" was, if true, indistinguishable from treachery. Yet it was precisely to call attention to Goebbels' unquestioned success in the United States and the M.O.I.'s complete failure to counter it that C-R had taken the trouble to make his speech. Such is the barren perversity of Ministers caught on the hop.

A man who moves the mandarins to such wild and woolly accusations must have about him something more impressive than the usual parliamentary personality. Ministers do not waste their words on the smaller fry. Perhaps they hoped to magnify their own prestige by attacking Marylebone's somewhat unorthodox M.P. If all the charges hurled against C-R had even a modicum of justification he would deserve to be written down as a poor wretch indeed, in which case he would be fitter subject for a crime story than luminant for a political spotlight. Not that the unruly C-R requires anyone to defend him. He seems quite capable of defending himself. More than once, and in many capacities, he has done so with outstanding success. He will probably do so again. With the exception of a patch or two of set-backs, sufficient indeed to have made many throw up the sponge, success has been the keynote of his career, and if the present record were intended to tickle the taste of the average film fan he might well be written up as a shining example of the local lad becoming famous. Had he chosen the screen as a career he would in all probability have scintillated in many a lead. He has about all the physical attributes necessary to stardom and does not by any means lack the histrionic requirements of film fame. There is hardly a society rag in London or New York that has not named him the handsomest man in Mayfair, and possessing as he does a nice sense of the social graces, a dashing manner, a disregard of narrow convention and a rich sense of humour, he combines all the elements which the novelists portray as personal charm, and which some people appear to resent.

But the happy warrior's presence in this chronicle is to illuminate the political scene and point the penalties of independence. So, to return to the Ministry of Misinformation, the B.B.C. and

most of the Press concentrated on reporting Bracken's abuse, and to this day the public is unaware of exactly what C-R did say to warrant such a violent personal attack. People must have thought that he had let the country down pretty badly. But turn again to the *Official Report*. This is the speech :—

" We have failed to bring home to the Americans the part we have played and are playing in this war. The majority in the U.S.A. do not appreciate that during three-and-a-half years, except for the first few months of ' phoney ' war, we have been engaging the enemy on one front or another all the time. Sometimes we have been occupied with many fronts at the same time, and sometimes we have had to fight alone. Every year the number and scope of our operations have grown, and this island has been the immediate or potential object of the enemy's most ruthless aerial attention. During all this time we have provided the greater part of the fighting men and the bulk of the munitions and other material. We have built and manned most of the ships, and we have kept the oceans clear for their sailing. When there has been a loss of ships or of sailors or of cargoes, it is this nation that has suffered most of the consequences.

" Simultaneously our people in these Islands have borne the brunt of the enemy's assaults on civilians, the burden of which is reflected in a toll of something over 50,000 killed and nearly twice that number more or less seriously maimed. But for the fact that we went to it and produced the necessary fighting defence in the form of Spitfires, Hurricanes, and such like, the toll would have been even heavier. The undeniable fact remains that in the dark days of 1940 we alone stood resolutely athwart the aggressor's road to world dominion, and by that stand we rendered possible the mobilisation of the United States of America, in whose operations we have since played no inconsiderable part.

" A fact too little known is that only now has American war output, although America has a population of 130,000,000, begun to exceed that of our population of 46,000,000. We have kept the pace in these Islands, despite enemy attentions, and, moreover, we have done it on a minimum diet. I only hope that Americans will be doing likewise when they have had three years of austerity—that is to say if Germany and Japan last as long as that—when they, the Americans, are up against the havoc of war and are on short rations.

" In the meantime it is very regrettable that so many Americans have a perverted view of British achievements and British aims, in respect of both the war and the post-war period. It is also regrettable that the number of these overseas grumblers is fast increasing. It is not enough for us in this country to dismiss

some of these people across the Atlantic as 'mere cranks,' and anyhow, it is hardly a compliment for us to tell the American people that at recent elections they have elected quite a number of cranks to control their affairs. I would remind the House of one or two of the statements of some of these newly-elected, and I think the one that is best known, possibly, is the glamorous Senator Mrs. Claire Luce."

The Minister of Information (Mr. Brendan Bracken): "I beg the hon. and gallant Member's pardon, but before he poses as an authority on America he must realise that Mrs. Claire Luce is not a Senator. She was elected to Congress."

Captain Cunningham-Reid: "I am very much obliged to the right hon. Gentleman, but anyhow I think I am correct in saying that she was elected not so very long ago in the recent American elections. She is a member of Congress. It was she who declared that the sky was the limit of American claims on the world, and she wants Washington to dominate all nations in post-war aviation, and I think she can hardly be unmindful of the fact that Britain constitutes no inconsiderable part of the 'all.'"

"I have no more time for Luce talk, but I want to say one or two words about other statements which have received publicity in the U.S.A. Take, for example, the case of Senator Tydings. I think in this case I am right in referring to him as 'Senator.' He thinks that we should give the United States final title to the leased West Indian bases out of gratitude for Lend-Lease. Representative Magnuson, with even less modesty, wants to convert the Pacific into an all-American ocean, including the British islands in that ocean, which besides our West Indian possessions are to be handed over, according to him, in return for American assistance to us. I have noted on these occasions that when these statements have been made they have received very wide publicity in the American Press. These particular representatives did not say one word about our assistance to America, which is unknown, to a very large extent, to the average American."

"How about our telling the Americans bluntly and often that we are to-day lend-leasing to the American people very nearly as much as they are lend-leasing to us. We equipped and supplied their Expeditionary Force to North Africa. The cost of making and equipping the land bases we have provided in this country for their Forces, and that includes the Air Forces, is somewhere in the region of £150,000,000. Over and above this, we continue to supply a large proportion of the present-day needs of the American Forces in the African sphere of operations."

India, Africa and Australia make extensive contributions in other spheres, and in the matter of technical designs we have given as much as we have received.

"I think it is also time that we reminded them of the experience, valuable though often bitter, that we have gained, and passed on to them without the bitterness. Above all is the time we have gained for them to put some armour on and recover from Pearl Harbour. Last but not least they would to-day undoubtedly be dominated by Germany, if it were not for a little incident that is known as the Battle of Britain. The House will probably be astonished when I say that there is a very large section of the community in America who give us very little credit for the Battle of Britain.

"It is none other than the *Wall Street Journal*, a journal with which no doubt the Minister of Information is conversant, which assails the Atlantic Charter, accuses us of wanting to run the whole world, and then takes consolation in the thought that Britain's day is done. Such sentiments, fostered in many influential places in the United States of America, may be built up to dangerous proportions when the burden of the war hits Americans to the same degree as it has hit us. I am not for one moment suggesting that the American capacity to take it is any less than ours, but, unlike Britain, the United States has a chorus of discordant anti-Allied voices which we should do our best to still.

"The Foreign Secretary, who has just returned from the U.S.A., himself said only the other day in the House that there are Americans who do not like us very much. This is all the more reason, and makes it all the more necessary, for a constant statement in the United States of our attributes and of our war and peace aims, and an equally constant reminder of the aims of the American critics. I think that is a matter which should be stressed, because their desire is to sell America a new and more ambitious form of isolationism. Their vision goes no further than political expediency. Their programme, which I presume is already well known to this House, well known as it is to practically everyone in America, is first of all the absorption of Canada, then permanent bases in the Atlantic and Pacific to be taken over from us, and a powerful standing Army and Air Force after the war, compulsorily enrolled. Observe, there is no question of disarmament and an international force for policing the world. Their programme also includes the domination of the world's air and a monopoly of world commerce. That is all they want.

☛ "Denouncing the aspirations of Vice-President Wallace, they advance concrete claims, calculated to appeal to large sections

of American voters, people susceptible to their propaganda because we have neglected to acquaint Americans sufficiently with the facts. It seems to me that acquainting them with the facts is of necessity a job for first-rate British journalists, and from the information I can gather, most of the propagandists we send to America are not qualified for that work. They have not had the experience.

“ ‘Why must America eat horse flesh whilst American beef is sent to England?’ That was only the other day asked by the Berlin radio, but, strangely enough, this trouble-stirring question was not a Goebbels brain-wave at all. It was a repetition of statements made by uninformed Congressmen in the United States of America.

“ I am quite convinced that if we had first-class British journalists in control of the propaganda service over there, they would very soon have put it over the radio and in the Press that very little beef comes across the Atlantic from the United States, and what does come over here is for the use of the American personnel on this side. There are several other unfortunate questions that are being put out, first in America, and then taken up by Goebbels, but, as time is getting on, I will not go into them.

“ For our Ambassador in the United States to complain at this late date that the Americans have ‘got us wrong’—to use his own words—reflects very little credit on our past efforts to make them get us right.”

It is to be observed that this speech which Bracken denounced as “ slimy ” was not without good effect, for a few months later he came out with a White Paper boosting Britain’s war record ! It was rather late in the coming, but it demonstrated that C-R’s lead and warning had been taken to heart.

Another result of this episode was the appearance in the London *Star* of an interview in which C-R at long last made public the facts concerning the trip to Honolulu. Up to that time he appears to have made no serious effort to scotch the prevailing calumny, thinking probably that the slur would fade and the truth emerge of its own volition. The Wedgwood letter should have banished the charge from the minds of all unprejudiced M.P.s but fairmindedness is not an outstanding characteristic of the usual party hack. Here is what the *Star* said the day after Bracken’s outburst :—

“ In his flat in London to-day Capt. Cunningham-Reid, Independent Conservative M.P. for St. Marylebone, gave me the inner story of his visit to America two years ago, following Mr. Brendan Bracken’s scathing attack on him in the House of Commons when he accused him of beachcombing at Honolulu

while American newspaper men were over here braving the perils of the Battle of Britain.

"Capt. Cunningham-Reid, rising on the adjournment, had told the House that the Americans had 'got us wrong' because we had failed to tell them enough about our achievements in the war, the help we had given them, and our post-war aims. It was then that Mr. Brendan Bracken replied with what Capt. Cunningham-Reid to-day called 'five minutes of concentrated abuse.'

"Capt. Cunningham-Reid said, 'This Honolulu gibe has grown whiskers, and the circumstances which prevented a full reply earlier are now happily past.

" 'One of my oldest friends is Mrs. Duke Cromwell.

" (Mrs. Duke Cromwell was formerly Miss Doris Duke, the tobacco heiress, sometimes said to be the 'richest woman in the world.')

" 'Early in the war when we began to evacuate British children, she cabled to me offering to provide a sanctuary for 500 of them.

" 'She proposed to build for them a special settlement, complete with their own nurses, doctors and school. It was, I think, the most generous individual offer any American has ever made to this country.

" 'I went at once to the Children's Overseas Evacuation Board.

" ' "For goodness sake clinch the offer at once," they told me.

" 'The Board offered me every facility to make an immediate journey. I went to see Mrs. Duke Cromwell at their request. I did not go as the Board's representative, and I have never said that I did.'

" Captain Cunningham-Reid said that he was to see Mrs. Duke Cromwell in New York. But when he arrived she was not there.

" 'To my deep regret,' he went on, 'I learnt of the premature birth and death of Mrs. Duke Cromwell's only child, which had occurred just as she was about to leave her home in Honolulu to come to New York. As it was, she went to the local hospital.

" 'It therefore became essential for me to visit her to make the necessary arrangements, as she, for obvious reasons, was unable to travel.

" 'I did so—and that was the "beachcombing" in Honolulu that Mr. Bracken so chivalrously referred to.

“ ‘ After spending only a very few days in Honolulu I returned to New York, to learn that, following the sinking of the ‘ City of Benares ’ with all those poor children on board, the British Government had decided to discontinue the evacuation scheme.

“ ‘ Thoroughly depressed, I came home to find that certain politicians, whom I regard as petty and irresponsible, had completely misconstrued the importance and object of my visit. But my hands were tied, because this generous American friend was in an extremely delicate state of health and this would not have been improved by further unpleasant and ungrateful publicity in this country.

“ ‘ But time, and Mr. Bracken’s feline outburst, have altered the situation.’ ”

A week later the House enjoyed a laugh at the Minister of Information’s expense. C-R asked him, with apparent innocence, why the British Information Service in the U.S.A. had not had the text of the Home Secretary’s speech of April 3rd on post-war planning until several days after the speech had been made. Bracken replied lamely, whereupon C-R asked sweetly : “ Is the Minister aware that the criticism in my question was made by Mr. Raymond Gram Swing in a cabled article to the *Sunday Express* last Sunday ? ” Bracken did not answer—no doubt remembering that when attacking C-R the previous week he had quoted Gram Swing as the authority for saying that Britain’s information service in America was O.K. ! Taking advantage of Bracken’s silence, C-R got up again and said : “ Will the Minister bear that in mind the next time he makes one of his restrained and statesmanlike speeches ? ” Appreciating the sally, the House laughed loudly.

But if he had got a little of his own back on Bracken and the M.O.I., C-R had not yet heard the last of “ Honolulu.” Nor was the *Star*’s fair treatment a sign that all the newspapers had attained equal decency. In May 1943 the *Daily Telegraph*, once more at the head of the pack, was in full cry again. “ CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID CRITICISED,” barked the headlines—as though there was anything new in that. “ WASTING M.P.’s TIME,” it yelled. But the information it gave was precious little. The “ time-wasting ” was the first speech in which any M.P. had attempted, since the war started three and a half years previously, to outline in the House what ought to be done with Germany after the war, and it stressed the necessity for examining the subject now so that when the European phase ended a proper plan would be available. Practical people would have thought that a quite commendable occupation of parliamentary time.

"Germany is the cauldron of world trouble," warned C-R. "In less than a century she has been responsible for five major wars. Again and again when the world was settling down to happier times everything has been upset by the inbred aggressiveness of the Teutons. In her inglorious history Germany has demonstrated that the reason for her existence is war. The German Empire always has been, and always will be, thoroughly bad and a menace to civilisation." He ridiculed the oft-repeated Conservative and Socialist suggestion that 80,000,000 embittered Germans could be educated to mend their ways. "What a fantastic job!", he cried, "to attempt to educate a whole race to be peaceful, a race that for centuries has had the instinct for war deep down in its nature. That instinct was even further ingrained by the humiliation and desire for revenge after the last war. How much more will it be ingrained after their defeat in this war. I believe it would be much easier to educate 80,000,000 baboons to give up baboon instincts."

Gazing round the House he finally exclaimed :—

"I am filled with apprehension, for I see idealists in our midst getting dangerously busy again. May I remind this House that it was a mixture of idealism and complacency that encouraged us after the last war to get slack with Germany? Our weak tolerance at that time has been rewarded by an exhibition of ruthless barbarism unprecedented in the history of the world. There have been mass murder from the air, the organised starvation of whole communities, bestiality towards little children and wholesale massacres. This war is the culminating, grandiose atrocity by which Germany has forfeited her right to nationhood. This time we cannot afford any weakness; this time stark realism must guide us."

Lord Hinchinbrooke had been lying in wait. He dubbed C-R's speech "inane," and a "sheer waste of time." Then ensued the following rough and tumble.

Viscount Hinchinbrooke (Dorset, South) : "It is a curious kink in our Constitution which enables any hon. Member to occupy the time of the House and keep the whole machinery of House of Commons business in train for half-an-hour after it might normally cease in order to give other hon. Members the benefit of such inane and inadequate views as have been presented to-day by the hon. and gallant member for St. Marylebone."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "Has anybody asked the hon. Member to make the kind of speech which he obviously intends to make?"

Viscount Hinchinbrooke : "The hon. and gallant Member has made his speech in his own way, and I propose to make my speech in my own way."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " That is no answer to my question."

Viscount Hinchingsbrooke : " The hon. and gallant Gentleman comes here and makes a speech which cannot have anything but the worst possible import. I would like to ask him, how dare he come here and make the type of speech he has just made ? "

Mr. Kirkwood : " Because he is a Member of Parliament and has the right to make the kind of speech he likes."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " Just because the Noble Lord is bare of any constructive ideas of his own, is that any reason why he should resent the constitutional rights of other Members or try to prevent them from putting forward what they sincerely believe to be the best for the country ? I have as much right to speak in the House as he has to get up and criticise me. I notice that he did not deny just now that he was asked to get up on this occasion by someone else in order to criticise me."

Viscount Hinchingsbrooke : " I repeat that it is sheer waste of time for a Member of the House, in the totally insignificant position that he holds "

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " I would rather be that than a party stooge."

Viscount Hinchingsbrooke : " having taken a course of action in the war which is universally condemned, having left the country at a critical time and gone off to gallivant in Honolulu "

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " May I ask you, Sir "

Mr. Deputy-Speaker (Major Milner) : " I would ask the Noble Lord not to proceed along that line of argument."

Viscount Hinchingsbrooke : " It is to be noticed that every two or three months a new pamphlet is to be seen by the hon. and gallant Gentleman for sale on the bookstalls."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " So the Noble Lord is jealous now ? "

Viscount Hinchingsbrooke : " I must confess that I have not yet invested in any copy, but one cannot help observing them in their flaming colours at various times for all to see and, no doubt, for a few misguided folk to buy."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker : " I hope the Noble Lord will adhere to the subject matter under discussion."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "Just now the Noble Lord had something to say about my war record. I should like him to tell the House something about his war record, and I ask him, as he takes exception to my war record, whether he knows anything about it at all and whether he would not have been wiser to have first looked into the matter. In the meantime let him tell the House about his record."

Viscount Hinchinbrooke : "I will take a suitable opportunity with the indulgence of the House. This is not the moment."

The Noble Lord then sat down and gave up the struggle. The best he had been able to do in his reply, which was conspicuous by its irrelevancy, was to drag in the stale old crack about C-R's American journey.

QUISLINGS AND CUCKOOS

"**P**ARLIAMENTARY FISTICUFFS. 'FEEL MY BUMP,' SAYS M.P." These and like inviting headlines one day close on the heels of the M.O.I. contretemps caused readers to feel instinctively that the bad man from Marylebone had got cracking again. They were right, and the "bump," they learned, was adorning the head of Commander Locker-Lampson. Up to that time C-R had shown remarkable restraint in respect of the moss-covered American sneer. Many M.P.s, knowing his record, marvelled at his reserve. Then he suddenly decided—or it just happened—to employ less gentlemanly tactics. The fracas, most unusual in the venerable precincts of the Palace of Westminster—although many a head rolled there in times past—arose out of further questions concerning the de luxe peregrinations of Prince Paul. C-R asked Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden what ailment had necessitated the Prince's removal from Kenya to South Africa, and Eden answered that he could add nothing to the previous replies.

Cunningham-Reid: "Does this precedent mean that the Government are prepared to give facilities to British political prisoners in this country should they desire to go abroad for the benefit of their health, and if it does not mean that, why has such favoured treatment been given to this foreign Royal quisling?"

Locker-Lampson: "Might I ask what medical disability the hon. and gallant Member for St. Marylebone was suffering from when he left England in the blitz?"

Cunningham-Reid: "Is it not a fact that a characteristic of the cuckoo is that it makes a nuisance of itself in other people's nests?"

M.P.s laughed at this quick come-back. The atmosphere was already enlivened in this instance by the gallant Commander's previous uncomplimentary interferences in matters raised by C-R. The gallant Captain had evidently had enough. Here is the Press Association's Lobby Correspondent's account of what followed:—

"The incident occurred in a corridor near the entrance to the House of Lords.

"When I approached Commander Locker-Lampson he asked me to feel a bump on the back of his head, and he said, 'It is true that blows were exchanged, and I may issue a writ against Captain Cunningham-Reid.'

"Captain Cunningham-Reid told me the full story of the episode.

"The culminating insult,' he said, 'was when Comdr. Locker-Lampson asked in the House to-day a supplementary question which had no bearing whatever on the question I was asking about Prince Paul of Yugoslavia.

"Afterwards, outside the Chamber, I drew him on one side and said to him, 'Are you going to continue making these personal attacks upon me in the House as you are doing regularly and as you have also done to many other members? Because I have no objection, very naturally, to you attacking me in an ordinary decent parliamentary way, but I have every objection to the dirty underhand personal attacks which you make upon me. Are you going to continue?'

"To this the Commander replied that he did not know, so I said, 'Well, in that event, I am going to give you fair warning that as there seems to be only one language you understand, I am going to retaliate in the future by personally attacking you in the House—something I have never done and do not like doing, but you force me into it.'

"He replied, 'That is blackmail.' I said, 'You can call it what you damned well like, you nasty old man,' to which he said, 'Take that back or I'll hit you.'

"So I said, 'Well, hit me.' He then ran at me whirling his arms round his head, and struck me on the chest.

"I retaliated by hitting him on the head. He went down on his knees, and I helped him up, and by that time other Members had got between us.

"I should not have made this public had he not done so first.'

"I understand," added the Lobby Correspondent, "that Commander Locker-Lampson intends to report the matter to the Speaker.

"Commander Locker-Lampson was winner of weight-putting at Eton, and served in the 1914-18 war, first with the R.N.A.S. Later he joined armoured cars.

"Captain Cunningham-Reid joined the Army as a despatch-rider at the age of 18 in 1914. Subsequently he served with the R.F.C., being awarded the D.F.C. and mentioned in despatches."

A typical and entertaining American version of this episode appeared in the *Washington Times* :—

"At last we begin to understand why these squabbles between our Government leaders seem so inelegant, if not downright

lowborn, base and churlish. The battlers don't have double names.

"The difference, we think, is graphically demonstrated in the nose-thumping contest between two members of the British House of Commons. Although the august combatants called each other names that wouldn't have seemed out of place at a master stevedores' annual clambake, they managed, nevertheless, to retain an air of refinement, or possibly even knight-errantry.

"The explanation, we are convinced, lies in their names. Even when they were trying to belt each other loose from their seats, or ridings, it was obvious that there could be nothing really vulgar or common about gentlemen called Alec Stratford Cunningham-Reid and Oliver Locker-Lampson.

"Consider, on the other hand, the set-to between Vice-President Henry Wallace and Secretary of Commerce Jesse Jones. Although they didn't so much as stick a finger in the other's eye, the fight seemed crude and unpolished. It was far from being an inspiration to the peasantry even if Jones did manage to work in a bit of delicate wit.

"Jones charged that Wallace was 'dastardly.' In giving out his statement he confided to friends that it was his pious hope that the newspapers would make a misprint.

"The Hon. Cunningham-Reid eschewed such namby-pamby stuff as 'dastardly.' He called the Hon. Locker-Lampson a 'cuckoo' and a 'nasty old man.' This is considered quite insulting in England, where the cuckoo is not regarded highly, even in the House of Lords. And 'nasty old man' is not regarded as particularly flattering in any language.

"Hon. Locker-Lampson said to Hon. Cunningham-Reid: 'You are a cad, Sir!' He then went on to accuse Hon. Cunningham-Reid of 'beachcombing' in Honolulu as the guest of Doris Duke Cromwell while England was being bombed.

"The Hon. Cocker-Spaniel—er, —Locker-Lampson, punctuated his 'You are a cad, Sir!' with a clip to the kisser, or 'fice,' as we used to say in 'Oundsitch. The Hon. Cunningham-Reid retorted with an aristocratic roundhouse to the smeller, or bugle as it is known in the Coldstream Guards."

Two days after Weight-putting Locker-Lampson had come up against Battling Cunningham-Reid the latter made the following statement in the House of Commons:—

"I desire, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to make a short personal explanation. Last Wednesday, and on previous occasions in this House, it has been stated that I left England

in the blitz. Such a statement need not necessarily imply any unworthy motives, but the manner in which this statement has more than once been used in this House has implied unworthy motives. Not only has this accusation been gravely damaging, but the exact opposite is the truth. Returning from America, having been delayed by transport difficulties for four weeks, I arrived back in London on the night of one of the worst blitzes this city has experienced—14th October, 1940. I had left England fourteen weeks earlier at a time when blitzes were unknown over this country. The sneer that I left England in the blitz can now be seen in its true perspective, and I emphatically repudiate this allegation which has been repeatedly used against me ; and I venture to hope that the House, being now in possession of this statement, will from to-day onwards accept it."

Said a Lobby Correspondent : " Never did I think I would live to hear Cunningham-Reid loudly cheered in the House ! "

Many months have passed since that little bout in the Lords' corridor, but never again has any Member ventured even a whisper in the House about C-R's American journey ! They evidently considered it prudent to keep their whispering for outside the House.

Nothing daunted, the following week C-R was once again pursuing Prince Paul. He demanded to know whether the Prince's name had been, or was to be, included on the list of the United Nations' Commission for the trial of war criminals. The reply was that it would be open to any of the United Nations Governments to submit to the proposed United Nations Commission evidence of crimes committed on its territory or against its own nationals. C-R was unsatisfied with this soft answer and exclaimed : " Is my right hon. Friend aware that millions of Yugoslavians consider that this man's treacherous collaboration with the Axis has been responsible for an untold amount of misery, humiliation and death ; and does he appreciate that the evasive answer that I have received will be taken as an indication of how in the future exalted war criminals are going to be protected and so escape justice ? "

Some months later C-R had the satisfaction of announcing to the House that " this puppet of the forces of reaction," Prince Paul, had been indicted by the Yugoslav Government as one of their foremost war criminals. M.P.s who had barracked C-R's previous airings of this royal topic kept silent, looking much embarrassed. It was really most irritating of the Marylebone Member to have been right all along—and of the Government to have been wrong. John McGovern put the tin hat on the Paul episode by asking Anthony Eden whether the Prince was

staying with Lord Louis Mountbatten. Eden said he was not aware of it.*

Parliamentary Reform was one of C-R's main concerns and sooner or later back he would come to it. He had dealt with this matter pretty cogently in a number of speeches and examined it at length in his *Blame the Old Gang* and other books. In this connection he pulled off quite an important success in the middle of 1943. Ever since the outbreak of war M.P.s had been complaining bitterly that the Government was encroaching more and more on their parliamentary privileges and especially on that known as the Adjournment—a period in which M.P.s are permitted by arrangement to state a case on any subject, from world organisation to the reason for the browning-off of Private Jones. Not satisfied with ineffective complaint, C-R organised a demand for the full restoration of the Adjournment. First he canvassed all his colleagues by letter, then got fifty of them to sign a Motion asking the Government to allot a definite half-hour every sitting day for Private Members to initiate debate on subjects and grievances in which they were specially interested. Backed by Herbert Williams, Quintin Hogg, Commander Bower (Conservatives), Evelyn Walkden, Ivor Thomas, Richard Stokes (Labour), W. J. Brown and Tom Driberg (Independent), and John Loverseed (Common Wealth), he finally persuaded the Government to recognise the need for the reform, and the Standing Orders were altered accordingly. It was a notable achievement and added considerably to C-R's repute as a master of parliamentary procedure. In a tabloid speech he responded gracefully to the concession and, incidentally, got in a dig at the Whips.

“During the war practically the only time that has been left for Private Members' Business has been the daily Adjournment period,” he said. “But the definition of this remaining Private Members' Parliamentary privilege has been ‘something he seldom gets.’ Recently, out of 16 consecutive Sitting Days, 13 Members who had been waiting, sometimes for many weeks, for a chance of introducing a matter that concerned them, were deprived of that opportunity because Government Business overran the allotted Adjournment period. In sporting parlance, a Member's chance worked out at 5 to 1 against. On all these abortive occasions, moreover, Ministers have had to go to a considerable amount of trouble to prepare their briefs, and come down to the House and all to no avail.

* Others seem to have awakened to the privileged importance of Prince Paul many months later, for in March 1945 questions were asked in the South African Parliament as to why he had been allowed an additional petrol ration. Which suggests the Prince of Quislings was doing rather well, as a “prisoner” in possession of a car.

"To-day, in a concession that is of the utmost importance to Private Members, the Government are prepared to make certain that if a Member has been allotted the Adjournment period on a Sitting Day, he gets it, providing of course, that he is in his place and that he catches Mr. Speaker's eye at the psychological moment. Looking at this concession from another angle, it means that there will be possibly 50 more opportunities per year for Private Members to initiate their own Debates, and I think the House will agree that this amounts to a major Parliamentary reform.

"As I and a number of my colleagues had a Motion on the Paper asking that this privilege should be granted and that the Standing Orders should be altered accordingly, I feel sure that those who have associated themselves with me in this would desire me to thank the Government for the very practical regard that they, the Government, have shown for the rights and privileges of Private Members.

"This reform would not have been brought about if it had not had the approval of the Government Whips. I myself have not always looked with approval on the Government Whips—a sentiment that has been heartily reciprocated by 'the boys in the back room.' When I sponsored this certain half-hour Adjournment period it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that it flitted through their thoughts, 'Why should we hand the hon. and gallant Member for Marylebone and one or two other hon. Members that we have in mind a certain opportunity of making nuisances of themselves?' But if I had ventured a bet that in the circumstances a spoke would have been put in our wheel, I frankly admit that I should have lost. As it is, I am faintly bewildered and slightly disconcerted. There is a popular expression, 'To kill with kindness.' Is it possible that that has been tried as a last resort? Anyhow, I do know this, that as the powers that be are prepared to concede this welcome privilege, I, for one, do not intend to abuse it."

From the tone of his final remarks some folk may have gathered that the man from Marylebone was mellowing. It is more likely he felt he could afford to unbend for a moment, having just secured the first triumph in his scheme for far-reaching Parliamentary Reform. A number of newspapers also relented sufficiently to hand him a pat for the achievement. Highly significant in view of the situation in Marylebone was the bouquet thrown out by the *Swindon Evening Advertiser*,* which hailed "the pertinacity of Captain Cunningham-Reid, who has

* Sir William Wakefield was then M.P. for Swindon as well as being C-R's prospective opponent in St. Marlebone.

secured for back-bench M.P.s the right to have at least half an hour at the end of every sitting. Before this concession was granted an M.P. might have had to wait months for an opportunity to ventilate some public or private question. Full advantage is now being taken of the concession and Captain Cunningham-Reid certainly sets an industrious example."

RED HERRINGS RAMPANT

C-R was not always concerned with "high politics" or acute questions of diplomacy. Just as he had championed the case of the old fellow cast out from the Ritz, so now he pleaded the cause of a child. This affair received tremendous publicity and became known as the "Mary" case, and the measure of C-R's effort is shown by the fact that it occupied 56 columns of the Parliamentary Report. The debate went on at intervals for weeks, a circumstance which reflected the alarm which his charges occasioned at the Home Office. Not only were two Under-Secretaries brought to their feet, but Herbert Morrison himself was drawn into the battle.

The 15-year-old girl in the case was prosecuted for being found drunk in Hyde Park in the company of soldiers at one o'clock in the morning. "Before relating what transpired," said C-R, "I desire to inform the House that both the girl and her mother—the father is dead—have given consent to the case and their names being made public. Nevertheless, in the girl's future interest, I have decided not to mention her name and I shall therefore refer to her as 'Mary.'" He explained how Mary, an only child, had been normally decent and happy until her mother was conscripted for war work. "Left much on her own, this high-spirited and attractive girl made undesirable friends and was completely dazzled by her new environment." In desperation the mother consulted the Marylebone probation officer, who apparently suggested a thrashing—at which the mother pointed out that Mary was considerably bigger than herself. After being picked up in Hyde Park the girl was sent by Magistrate Miss Lily Montague, of Chelsea juvenile court, to the Shirley remand home at Croydon for medical examination, then put on a year's probation and ordered to do canteen work at a land-girls' Y.W.C.A. hostel in the country. "For five weeks from then until I drew the Home Secretary's attention to the case, she was without proper supervision," said C-R, "no probation officer visiting the hostel to discover what conditions prevailed there during this period."

The girl's working hours varied, "but not counting meal-times this girl of 15 had to put in on an average 10 back-breaking hours a day of drudgery, scrubbing floors and kitchen pots, cleaning lavatories and the like until her hands were in a pitiable state." She was doing practically all the domestic work of the straggling old Victorian mansion, "exploited on work which

was equivalent to adult hard labour." C-R had previously told the House how the warden responsible for the overwork had since left the hostel, but had been generous enough before going to tell the land-girls all about Mary's record. The child felt an outcast, deserted and miserable. When she complained about the immense toil she was threatened with dismissal and being haled to court again. Continuing the story, C-R said another girl from the same remand home was dismissed from the same hostel, where she was receiving V.D. treatment at a local hospital, after being found with a man in her bedroom and had remarked, "They have driven me to it again."

"The circumstances of these two girls who followed each other to this particular hostel," he said, "convey a very ugly impression that these wretched children were just farmed out for sweated labour and that the treatment they received was calculated to make these young and susceptible girls into confirmed prostitutes. Even if we were to discount entirely the graver aspects of this case, what an extraordinary lack of human psychology has come to light! Is this the way our child delinquency system encourages a girl to regain her self-respect? Certainly this juvenile Mary Magdalen has not been so fortunate in the inspiration to make good as was the older Biblical Mary Magdalen.

"On the day Mary was charged about 30 other girls were up for the same sort of offence. One wonders how many of these and hundreds like them are receiving such soul-destroying treatment as Mary received.

"I trust that in view of what I have told the Home Office they will not attempt to side-track or to brush aside the sum total of what I have conveyed to them to-day, but that this total, together with the recent case of the boy who was birched, will convince the Home Office and will convince this House that the whole system pertaining to juvenile delinquents is rusty, is rotten, and should now be overhauled."

Home Office Under-Secretary Peake admitted in reply that there had been a "slip-up," and assured M.P.s that the greatest possible vigilance would be exercised to see that nothing of the sort occurred again. So that was that—or at least so the public thought, until six days later they read:—

"M.P'S CHARGES DISPROVED. HOME SECRETARY REBUKES CUNNINGHAM-REID."

¶ What had occurred was that Herbert Morrison had decided himself to take charge of the case, and had gone down to the House and contradicted what his Under-Secretary had previously admitted. He proceeded to inform the House that C-R was all

wrong, and that the officials concerned were all right. As soon as he had finished, C-R jumped to his feet and made a fighting reply : " It is really a pity the Home Secretary has attempted to whitewash this case by trying to divert attention from my main and all-important allegations which originally the Home Office were unable to deny. It is a pity, because a lot of good was being done, inasmuch as, because of the publicity being given to this case, other bad employers of girls on probation were minding their p's and q's in regard to the defenceless girls under their protection. As a result of the reply I have had to-day, all these bad employers will be greatly relieved, and will come to the conclusion that whatever they do to the unfortunate probationers they employ, the Home Office will protect them because of their semi-official capacity."

Describing the Home Secretary's statement as " red herrings rampant," he then made the additional charge that the first warden of the hostel had set a bad example to the girls, and that she had brought intoxicating spirits into the hostel, which was against Y.W.C.A. regulations. He pointed out that the Home Secretary was now suggesting the place was a nice situation where a girl could have good surroundings and improving influence. He reminded the Home Secretary that he had not denied that a girl had been found in that hostel with a lorry-driver in her bedroom. He added that he himself had visited the hostel and had got his information about it from people who lived there, while the Home Secretary had got his information from the headquarters of the Y.W.C.A., which were not situated in that particular hostel !

Perhaps somewhat fortunately for the Government, the attention of Members at this stage was diverted by a heated intervention from Lord Winterton, who accused C-R of blackening a woman's name, and challenged him to make his statements about the women known as the first warden outside the privileged purlieus of the House of Commons. C-R retorted : " Members are always challenging one another in the House of Commons. As to my being challenged to mention, outside the House, the name of a certain woman in the ' Mary ' case, all I have to say is, what an extraordinary request ! At present the public have no idea who she is, or where she came from. It is difficult to appreciate how one can blacken a woman's name in the eyes of the public when one has not mentioned the name. So far nothing has been said in the House to make me change my views on the main and all-important points concerning the treatment and surroundings of a girl of 15 anxious to make good."

Then in a *Daily Mirror* interview he challenged the Home Office to examine in his presence the witnesses who had given him the

information and offered to apologise if his allegations proved unjustified. "If, though, my case proves to be well-founded," he added, "I shall expect an apology in the Commons." There was no response from the Home Office. Perhaps they thought C-R had been silenced by the Morrison and Winterton big guns. If this was their hope they were sadly disappointed, for soon afterwards he returned to the attack with gusto, revealing that Herbert Morrison had been led up the garden path by anxious officials, and that Mary had at last been happily placed on a farm, as she had previously asked to be—which left no doubt among M.P.s that here, just as in the brush with Bracken, C-R had secured results.

A final comment on the matter came twelve months later, when the public was shocked to learn of the conditions that had prevailed at the Home Office remand home at Hammersmith, the superintendent of which was a woman who had for some time been in charge of "Mary." The inquiry which followed not only awakened the public to the need for better supervision of the child victims of misfortune but also had a salutary effect on the Home Office. It would thus seem that, in addition to being proved right, C-R had initiated a clean-up where it was urgently needed. He is therefore fully entitled to take pride in the part he has played in bringing a new and happier way of life to an ill-circumstanced section of the nation's children.

Apart from his intercessions in matters of child welfare and the airing of individual grievances of his constituents, the Member for Marylebone concentrated during the war years on conditions in the Services—his first love as it were—and Parliamentary Reform, throwing in from time to time an exposure of inefficiency in high places and some provocative suggestions on diplomatic affairs.

When the King opened the 1944 session with his customary Address to the faithful Lords and Commons, the House was not surprised to hear C-R again expressing dissatisfaction with what the Government had done and intended to do—or not to do—for the people in the Services. This time he was thinking ahead, and in an Amendment to the Royal Address, he "regretted that there are no specific proposals in the Gracious Speech for providing that ex-Servicemen and women will not be let down after this war as they were after the last one," and demanded "that those who have been or are to be demobilised shall have reasonable security from unemployment; decent housing; generous pensions for the disabled; and that the dependants of those who die shall be adequately provided for."

In putting forward that demand he was expressing the point of view of well-nigh everybody in the country, in and out of the

Services. Needless to say, he did not get much support, but he had the satisfaction of telling the Government what was expected. And this was precisely the time to tell them, for it is in the King's Speech that the Government outlines its policy and indicates its programme for the session. C-R ought not to have been left with the responsibility of stressing the needs of the demobilised and their dependants. It should have been done by one of the parliamentary groups or parties, some members of which were shouting loudly enough on public platforms but were mighty careful not to risk causing offence by carrying public sentiment to the proper place. C-R had no such qualms. Inured by long habit against the frowns of officialdom, he staked out the Service folks' claims clearly and early, and if their reward proves to be less than just—as it most probably will—they will have C-R as one of the few to thank that they are not even worse off.

In March 1944 he was again standing up for the Service people—once more demanding their right to take part in political discussion when off duty and out of uniform. It is nothing short of astonishing that it should be necessary to argue such a claim. Under any real democratic system the political rights of the men and women in national service would not differ from those of civilians. The fact that this equality is denied them is a vicious survival of a bad old past, and there is no reason at all except the crusted conceit of reactionary rulers that the disparity should remain. In a speech* which initiated a whole day's debate C-R neatly summarised the difference between past and present armies and made an unanswerable case for Service equality with civilians.

War Minister Sir James Grigg, when he came to reply, apparently considered it advisable not to attempt an answer to C-R's arguments and made the best of a difficult job by running round the main question and passing the buck to the Cabinet, which, he said, intended to leave things as they were and not alter the House's decision of the previous year. Then, thoughtlessly, and most unfortunately for himself, he added the rebuke: "I would have thought that the finality of the decision of the House of Commons was one of the fundamental rights of man in this country." Chipped in C-R amid loud laughter: "It was not so the day before yesterday!" It was a delightful retort, for two days previously the Cabinet had shaken the edifice of democracy to its foundations by refusing to accept the House's majority decision that women teachers should be paid the same as men. Disconcerted, Grigg answered lamely: "There was a reconsideration in that case."

* See Appendix, page 272.

If other M.P.s had given as much support in the Chamber as they seemed inclined to give during free discussion in the smoke-room C-R might have got somewhere near having his proposals accepted then and there. But most Members being prone to accept anything for the sake of not embarrassing their leaders, the fighting men had to remain in the paradoxical position of having the least say in the things they were supposed to be fighting for.

But about a year afterwards C-R's efforts bore fruit. His demand was conceded. However, before rectifying, or at least moderating, this inequality so long suffered by the Forces, the War Office chiefs waited until the Conservatives began manœuvring for the approaching General Election, expecting no doubt to gain a grateful Service vote for the Churchill set-up.

C-R, whilst fighting to secure this reform for the Services, did not on that account abandon attempts at securing changes elsewhere. Having toured the country on the need for Parliamentary Reform, written three best-sellers and distributed a number of leaflets on the subject, he again raised the matter in the Commons in May, 1944. In an earlier attack on the Party Whips he had slung many a barbed dart at the Old School Tie Brigade and caused no end of consternation in privileged quarters. Now, speaking to the text "that Parliament brought up to date and freed from long standing abuses would be to our advantage in peace and war," he went for them again.

Beginning gently in low gear, he explained his attitude to the parties. "I want to raise the question of Parliamentary Reform," he said. "Once upon a time I was a member of a party, but recently, by my own political actions, I deliberately severed myself from that party. The inference may be drawn that I am against the existence of parties. On the contrary, I have no quarrel with the party system as such. My objection is that the party system has been carried too far, to the unjustifiable length of preventing the elected representatives of the people acting in the way that they, and very often the majority of their constituents, think right." Gearing up, he deplored the habit of so many members voting as they were told instead of on the merits of the case, and showed how this could be altered. Finally going into top, he roared down on the Whips with the assertion that "they either frightened or bribed M.P.s to carry out their orders." Pointing in the direction of the Whips' Office back of the Chamber, he declared, "The boys in the back room have a bun for practically every taste," and added, after a significant pause, "It is a national disgrace that national honours should be handed out for party services and to enrich party coffers."

Lord Winterton, though not always on the side of the angels, piped in here and there in an effort to help the Whips, but far

from silencing C-R the interruptions only supercharged him, inspiring a peroration which concentrated the whole case for reform. "Parliament," he concluded, "is to-day run too much by the party caucuses and not enough by the representatives of the people. The majority of key Cabinet positions are not filled by the best the country can provide but by the best party men. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Had our country not been governed by privileged inefficients produced by our peculiar party system Germany would never have been allowed to rearm and this war might not have taken place."*

On another occasion around this period he tackled the same subject—Parliamentary Reform—from a different angle—the ever-growing Government encroachment on the parliamentary prerogatives of M.P.s. He appears to have been incensed at the Cabinet taking drastic measures in a number of strikes without consulting the representatives of the people. Members could not avoid a laugh when he divulged how he had attempted to warn the Government against ignoring Parliament, but had been prevented because the time was consumed in discussing events of momentous importance—to wit, the merits and demerits of the House of Commons Kitchen Committee—during which two Members had made the very serious complaint that on more than three occasions at lunch-time fish was off by one o'clock. "As a result of this debate," he continued, "there was no time left to discuss the—by comparison—unimportant question whether the Government should consult the House on a grave matter of national importance."

Having developed his thesis with some solid arguments he ended with a slashing attack on "this Methuselah Government" and a punch at "yes-men" M.P.s. "Our leaders," he said, "by their high-handed behaviour, are doing an immense disservice to the nation. They have enjoyed so many years of continual office and of immense power, which we, the Members of this House have given them, that it has gone to their heads, with the result that they now not only ignore, but have become literally contemptuous of Parliament. Human nature being what it is, you cannot altogether blame them, because it is, apparently, so easy to take advantage of the House as at present constituted. The majority of M.P.'s are either too old, too stale, too mesmerised or just too, too Tory, to do anything but be a drab chorus chanting a shrill subservient 'Yes, yes, yes.' But a day of reckoning is bound to come and in the meantime, if the majority of Conservatives are content to sit down, either occasionally in this House or more often in their own houses, and complacently relinquish the nation's constitutional practices and

* See Appendix, page 275.

safeguards, they will only have themselves to blame if as a result, unnecessary disasters come their way.”*

C-R's sentiments, had they been published, would have been echoed all over the land. No wonder the Tory troglodites strove to provide Marylebone with another M.P. Yet though they hated his views and considered him a renegade from their camp, there were not a few who commended his courage. Many of them joined in the clamour against him in defiance of their better judgment and some were even heard to admit a tinge of remorse when time and again he showed that he bore them no malice. Two weeks after Lord Winterton had tried to trip him up during his speech on Parliamentary Reform, the noble Lord himself rose to advocate Parliamentary Reform to the extent of a rearrangement of the Commons committees, a proposal included in C-R's own ideas of reform. C-R listened attentively and, when called by the Speaker, drew a hearty laugh by declaring himself “in the peculiar position of concurring with the Noble Lord” and “trusting that such concurrence may in future be reciprocated.” Then, after a short speech, he turned to the Speaker whose recent election had given him occasion for a declaration of principle, and said: “In view of my very keen interest in this subject of Parliamentary Reform, which I consider to be a question of paramount importance, it was my desire to make a somewhat lengthy speech to-day. But as you have many more items on your menu to-day, Mr. Speaker, and you do not want any of them to be ‘off,’ and as I had an innings on this subject a few weeks ago, I do not want to abuse the very real consideration which you have shown to such a small minority as myself.” With that he sat down. The House accepted it as a generous gesture, and once again, over lunch, M.P.s took sides concerning the alternating decency and audacity of what one called “this strange mixture of a man.”

Adding to the “mixture,” C-R was found a few days later defending cartoonist Low, prince of thought-provoking mirth-makers. Into the Chamber that day, holding a copy of the *Evening Standard* gingerly as though in dire fear of contamination, rushed Major-General Sir Alfred Knox, septuagenarian Member for High Wycombe. In the smoke-room he had been shocked to see Low making grim comment on three of the world's few remaining kings. The cartoon depicted George of Greece, Peter of Yugoslavia and Victor of Italy armed with pop-guns peering round a door over the caption “De-Partizans.” Seething with indignation—but minus Low's famous bath-towel—Knox denounced the cartoon as “representing the heads of three Allied Governments in a most undignified position

* See Appendix, page 279.

acting as gangsters" and sorrowfully deplored that it should have appeared in a newspaper the proprietor of which was Lord Beaverbrook, "a very prominent member of His Majesty's Government." The irate General had just suggested that steps be taken, in the interest of the war effort, to prevent the recurrence of any such cartoon, when C-R strolled in and joined the fun.

"It seems to me," he said, "that the main complaint of the hon. and gallant Member is that the cartoon is not conducive to helping the war effort. In this Low cartoon —[An Hon. MEMBER: "Very low."]—that was an unconscious pun—these three kings are taking pot-shots at the partisans."

Mr. Stokes: "Will the hon. and gallant Member point out to the House that a cork is attached to a piece of string?"

Captain Cunningham-Reid: "I did not realise that it was as ineffective as all that. Really, things are getting past a joke if we are going to raise such complaints in this House, because Low, as we all know, is always taking pot-shots at the high and mighty. He does not hesitate to have a go at Roosevelt and Stalin and even at our own Prime Minister—[An Hon. MEMBER: "Lord Beaverbrook."]—or even at his boss. The only exception one can possibly take to this cartoon is that it is rather obscure, and I do not believe that many people would understand it, while it is certainly not as funny as Low generally is. The main idea, I suppose, is that the three kings stand for the old order of things and against progressive Partisans. There are millions in this country who think exactly the same thing, but, just because one or two Members of Parliament take a different point of view, they automatically feel that no newspaper has the right to publish a cartoon which happens to lacerate their own particular susceptibilities. I believe this to be a case of 'much ado about nothing.'

That put *finis* to the General's protest. The intervention was also a shrewd blow at those who, throughout the war, had shown a keen desire to have the Government clamp down on the traditional freedom of speech. More than that, C-R had not hesitated to express the views of all those who "thought exactly the same thing" as Low's caricature suggested. He clearly had no time for discredited kings, although he must have known the great regard in which they were held in certain circles.

In June, 1944, just after D-Day, he was again giving voice to the popular view. Premier Winston Churchill who, despite his Burke-like inability to keep pace with domestic political trends, was the pivot of Britain's war strategy, had dashed over to the small French bridge-head to have a look at things. The risks

were considerable and when, after his return, the country was told of his escapade, many people expressed their anxiety at the head of the Government taking such chances. The majority of M.P.s also deprecated the venture. But C-R was the only man in Lords or Commons to say what he thought, and what others thought. He did so with reason and restraint, and subsequently it was observed that the Premier did not visit the bridge-head again until the danger had greatly diminished.

But in criticising the all-powerful Premier, C-R was asking for rebuke, and it was clear even while he spoke that the Front Bench had prepared to oblige. Instead of the Premier himself replying—or the Deputy Premier or the Leader of the House, as is customary when the P.M. is called to book—Brendan Bracken was put on the job. Seeing the Information Minister lurking behind the Ministerial box C-R guessed what was afoot and asked pointedly what the matter at issue had to do with his department. When, later on, Bracken interrupted, C-R, recalling the personal abuse spilled in the debate on the M.O.I.'s operations in America, suggested that Bracken should not once again resort to the second-rate trick of concealing a bad case behind a barrage of dust. How right was C-R's anticipation became manifest with Bracken's first words in reply. He accused C-R of showing "a synthetic solicitude for the Prime Minister in a rather greasy way." Interjected C-R amid laughter: "Here we go again!" Naturally, the Press seized on Bracken's phrase, and the next day's headlines gave a garbled report of the "greasy speech." How far the adjective was justified may be gathered from the ungarbled report taken from the *Official Record*.*

Was the P.M.'s journey really necessary? No member of the Government was able to maintain that it was. Bracken seems to have thought there was more in the critic's observations than he was allowed to admit. It may not have been without significance that after championing his Chief, when Parliament ended for the day Bracken was observed to leave the House with his arm linked in C-R's. Maybe he admired his pluck, or perhaps thought it prudent to make a friendly gesture to the fellow who would suffer the sneers of the next day's headlines.

*See Appendix, page 282

NEW MOVES IN MARYLEBONE

STEPPING out of his small black car one morning in the spring of 1944, the Member for Marylebone, puffing an Indian cigar, found himself confronted by his newspaper-seller thrusting out the latest edition. "It seems you're for it, Sir," the newsman said.

C-R was already familiar with the "news" and it appears to have troubled him little. Having been deprived of the Conservative Whip he was not surprised that Central Office should, after an artistic interval, apply the ban to his local supporters.

True, these supporters were the majority of the Marylebone Conservative and Constitutional Union which had run the parliamentary affairs of the borough with hardly a break since 1867; but as they had long demonstrated a desire to run them without too much regard to the dictates of Central Office, they had been disaffiliated. Such is the method of the Conservative party when the rank and file by a constitutional majority go against the ordinance of the central body. In place of the local Union the Central Office had extended recognition to the rival organisation, the mushroom Conservative Association which twelve years before had unsuccessfully sponsored Sir Basil Blackett.

Satisfied and inspired by this official recognition, the local caucus probably thought the next election was for them as good as in the bag. All they wanted was a candidate capable of defeating the detested C-R. Following the failure with Sir Basil Blackett they had for some time had a champion in the person of the wealthy Sir John Fitzgerald, Bart. Quite a sizeable bit of the wealth must have vanished during the period in which he nursed the constituency. Anyway, tiring of the toil or perhaps conceiving it a waste of time and money, Sir John, after being rebuffed by the vote of confidence that went against him, gradually faded out and the job was again thrown open. No first-rate novice applying—perhaps they thought it well to steer clear of Marylebone's political minefield—Sir William Wavell Wakefield, better famed as a footballer than as a politician, stepped into the breach. M.P. for Swindon, Sir William's majority at the 1935 election—when most Conservative majorities soared—was only 975. It is therefore permissible to suppose he was not very certain of retaining Swindon's confidence, so—to quote the *Swindon Advertiser*, he was "deserting" them. But

there was no mention in the *Advertiser* of Swindon's loss being Marylebone's gain, as had been the case in the *Warrington Guardian* when C-R transferred to the South. All in all, it was difficult for Marylebonians to avoid the impression that Sir William had not been entirely disinterested when during the "Honolulu" hullabaloo he went out of his way to attack C-R, who was a fellow Conservative. But in taking on the Marylebone candidature he evidently had the support of Central Office, for the knighthood which was bestowed on him in June, 1944, was not calculated to hamper his chances in a division where title-seeking had at times assumed the dimensions of a major industry.

Soon after Sir William had succeeded to the role of Sir Basil and Sir John—which had been prosecuted in earlier years by Sir Rennell, Sir Douglas and Sir Samuel—he advertised the opening of a local office to cope with the troubles and complaints of Marylebonians. As the office was functioning only one day a week Marylebonians were not immensely impressed. What impressed them much more was Sir William's departure shortly afterwards on a four months' expedition to South Africa.

As one M.P. does not usually trespass on the preserves of another, C-R naturally did not allow the breach of etiquette to pass unchallenged, and, politics being the game it is, could not fail to call attention to the difficulty of Sir William's looking after local interests from the distant heights of Cape Town. Said the *Marylebone Mercury* in quotation of a C-R speech :

"At the forthcoming election I have as my opponent one who is clearing off from his present constituency, where his majority was very small, in the hope of horning in on my majority, which was very large. Licking his lips in anticipation my opponent proceeded to say that right away he would look after the interests of St. Maryleboneites. The man who was attempting to be M.P. for two constituencies then went to South Africa. I am not for one moment suggesting," said Captain Cunningham-Reid, "that he ran away from the Ro-bombs, but I am suggesting that if ever there was a time when the inhabitants of St. Marylebone wanted advice and assistance from anybody who sincerely had their interests at heart, it was during the ordeal they had to undergo as a result of the serious casualties and devastation caused by those fiendish death-machines."

Commented William Hickey of the *Daily Express* on the six M.P.s, including Wakefield, who were still away after three months :

"They set out on a mission to South Africa in the spring. It was not a mission with any outstanding purpose : just a

plain, good-natured mission. They went on a troopship and had tugs of war with the soldiers. They had a grand time in Cairo. They penetrated Northern Nyasaland and were startled by the moaning of hyenas. Every few weeks a line or two appeared in some newspaper or other about them. Nobody seemed to know quite what they were up to. They were supposed to come back in September. By mid-September they had travelled 12,000 miles and 'had more to do.' By mid-October they were said to be splitting up to come home. Now a friend of one of the M.P.s tells me they do not expect to be back before Christmas."

According to Hannen Swaffer, a South African columnist remarked of this pleasant trip: "It is my opinion that much money would have been saved for war effort, and much petrol and transport conserved, had the delegates stayed at home, even though they did lose a delightful Cook's tour. Their itinerary compels me to ask how long the people of Nyasaland will continue to be fooled by such futile flying-visits, which devote so much time to luncheons, dinners, sherry-parties, bun-fights and poodle-faking in general."

It need hardly be said that the *Daily Telegraph*, which had wept so copiously over what it considered C-R's delinquencies, found no tears to confound the hopes of Wakefield. But it gave plenty of space to a statement made in the House by Wing-Commander James, the Member for Wellingborough, which by implication accused C-R, and without the usual parliamentary decency of warning, of keeping away from London during the descent of the early V.i's. Maybe the Wing Commander, who had long baited C-R in the local caucus, was launching a feint attack to attract the fire from the wandering Wakefield. Anyhow, it transpired that C-R had been active either in the House or the constituency during the whole fly-bomb phase up to that time except for a few days spent in a nursing home. On leaving there he went straight to Westminster and made this statement to what proved to be an unusually sympathetic House:

"I desire to make a personal explanation," he said. "The hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for Wellingborough (Wing-Commander James) is concerned, and I have given him notice of my intention. Last week, the Wing-Commander, while I was in a nursing home, without giving me notice, made a personal attack upon me. He asked you, Sir, if you were aware that since alerts had been sounded in Southern England the hon. and gallant Gentleman the Member for St. Marylebone had not been in his place? You, Sir, and other Members of this House were good enough to voice your objection to such defamation of a fellow Member. This personal attack, which

was not only mean but, as I am about to show, also untrue, appeared in the Press throughout the country. This kind of damaging publicity, unlike the flying bomb, is impossible to catch up with and destroy, especially as a denial has not the same news value as the original accusation made behind the privileged skirts of this House. Thousands of people will never get to hear that the accusation they originally heard, that ever since the arrival of the flying bomb I had absented myself from the House of Commons, was not only a lie but that it was said at a time when I was unable to answer back."

Giving the facts, C-R continued: "Every week since the flying bombs have been over the south of England I have been in the House of Commons with the exception of the last seven Parliamentary days, when I was in a nursing home. You, Sir, will no doubt recollect my discussing with you in that very Chair, soon after an alert, the question of the Ministry of Information Vote which was coming on the following week. Incidentally, during those early weeks of the flying bomb I have no recollection of seeing in the House Wing-Commander James, but I for my part have no burning desire to do him an injustice and I feel that he must have been lurking somewhere in the House, as otherwise he could not, by throwing a stone at someone else, have drawn attention to his own gallant interpretation of 'The boy stood on the burning deck.'"

The sympathetic laughter at the final sarcasm and the deep resentment shown at the injustice of James's accusation marked another stage in the regard to which C-R was attaining among the more thoughtful section of the Commons. After the explanation—which was more a protest, since no explanation was really necessary—James rose and, according to the *News Review*, "drowned by shouts of 'Apologise,' stammered and was sharply told by the Speaker that if he did not want to withdraw he had better say nothing." At this the cry of resentment reached crescendo and James apologised. But he did so with such grudging grace that Members again began to bellow and above the din was heard "Oh! Oh!" and "It stinks!" Then they applauded C-R generously. "Marylebone's Independent M.P. was given unaccustomed cheers," said the *News Review*.

This pre-election phase of the Marylebone battle for the time being suspended, C-R once more directed his attention to the shortcomings of the Government. Throughout the summer the flying bomb with the flaming tail had landed in clusters on "Southern England." Londoners bore up well, but disliked the superior official pose which suggested they might panic if told too much. In fact for some months they were told nothing. Later, treated as half-wits, they were induced to believe

that the Government had seen what was coming and had taken appropriate steps to deal with it. The truth is that Whitehall was many steps behind the Wilhelmstrasse in this aspect of scientific application, and the Government maintained silence not so much for reasons of security as because official statements would have evoked questions and exposed its incapacity. A Government which feels justly confident of itself seeks rather than avoids open consultation with Parliament. "I believe the Government is making a great mistake," said the Member for Marylebone, "in stifling open debate on a subject that so intimately concerns the people. The public is made all the more anxious by hearing that the fly-bombs are only to be discussed in secret sessions. There are certain aspects of the matter on which public discussion would in no way run counter to security and might well allay current misgivings and perplexities."

But the omniscient chiefs declined to speak or let others speak, not at least until C-R's insistence forced them to it. Meantime the American public received all the news about the flying bombs the papers could carry. But at home the Government spokesmen did nothing but reiterate the claims of "security." Weary of it, C-R at length got the Speaker's permission to initiate a discussion, submitted the points he intended to raise to the Home Office, and promised not to mention anything that Department considered prejudicial to public safety. Hopefully, C-R awaited the day of debate. When it came and he was just about to start, the Home Office refused to allow the debate to take place. All for the security of the State, no doubt—or was it the security of the hacks-in-office against the people's wrath?

Angry but undaunted, C-R then secured the Speaker's permission to use the time allotted him for the banned debate on another subject, and spontaneously, without a single note—a feat which did not go un-commented on by his colleagues—delivered a remarkable speech on "retribution," a title probably inspired by his furious feelings about the Home Office.

Even those who disagreed with his policy conceded at once that it had the merit of being positive and did not shirk the difficulties involved. Here are a few extracts from *Hansard* :

"As the war comes to its climax, and the enemy commits even fouler atrocities, the question of retribution has become one of major concern. The Government find it difficult to make any detailed pronouncement on this subject, because they have to reconcile their policy, if any, with the policies of the United States and of Russia. But that is no reason why back benchers should not express their views, and express the views

of what they consider to be the majority of their constituents. The nation was deeply moved by the horrors of the annihilation of the whole village of Lidice in Czechoslovakia, by the torturing of simple peasants and their children in Russia, and by the extermination, in gas chambers, of thousands of Hungarian Jews. But all this took place so far away from England that there was an air of unreality about it all, and there were even some who felt that these stories might be exaggerated.

"Recently, however, what others have had to suffer has been brought more home to us because the incidents have been nearer to our homes. Only the other day and, comparatively speaking, only a few miles away from London Bridge, the Germans massacred every inhabitant of the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane. The men were shot in batches of 20, and women and children were blown up and then burned to death in the church. Elsewhere, a French butcher, for being patriotic, was spiked through the throat on his own meathook, while he was alive. Fifty Royal Air Force prisoners of war were cold-bloodedly put to death, and the day before yesterday we heard of another 33 prisoners being killed by these fiends. I think that brings the total of our prisoners who have been murdered by the Germans up to 152.

"But what brought many people to what I might term a final sense of reality was this indiscriminate robot bombing, the mutilation of old and young folk on our very doorsteps so to speak. As a result I warrant that there are fewer people to-day who cherish kind and forgiving thoughts to the German people. I regret, though, that there remain a number of sloppy idealists who still complacently think that we can prevent the Huns from starting another war by educating them to be good children and not to do it again, and by leaving Germany intact except for the fact that we shall be policing it awhile with forces from the main victorious Powers. Such people utterly refuse to be realists.

"The only way to prevent worse Hun horrors to come is once and for all to do away with such a hub of friction and trouble. Germany must be completely divided up between the countries that surround her. Such a procedure would remove the complications and precariousness of international armies of occupation, with the attendant possibility that the Isolationists in America and a weak Government over here will recall their forces, when, if Russia remains on her own, by then Germany will for certain have gone Communistic and will sooner or later be absorbed by Russia. Under the solution that I am advocating, it will not matter if the march of time dims our memories and produces leniency, for the responsibility of what to do with

Germany will then be out of our hands. The countries around that part of the world which was Germany, would not give up in a hurry territory which had been German, and that had been ceded to them by Peace Treaty."

Mr. Bartle Bull (Enfield) : "Is the hon. and gallant Member quite certain that these countries would accept these parts of Germany?"

Hon. Members : "Yes."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I think a number of countries would do so. For example, Holland would, I believe, welcome more territory. Belgium could do with more, and the territory of Czechoslovakia could, with advantage, be increased."

Earl Winterton (Horsham and Worthing) : "Might I interrupt the hon. and gallant Member, in order to strengthen his argument? Is it not a fact that a great deal of modern Germany is country which has been stolen from other countries in the past; and is it not certain that those countries are going to get it back, whether the Socialist Party like it or not?"

Captain Cunningham-Reid : "I hope so but I want to emphasize to-day that nothing less than the extinction of Germany as a nation will prevent her nationals getting together again and organising another war. To the non-realists in our midst this solution may sound drastic, but it is no good being anything less than drastic with Huns; and be it on the Huns' own heads, for, by their loathsome actions, they have forfeited all rights to nationhood."

"By all means take reprisals by death of 100,000 war criminals. if you can catch them, but do not lose sight of the fact that that will spur the remainder on to fresh efforts for revenge, if they have a country of their own from which to organise. We may catch a few of the guilty ones and put them to death, and I hope we do, but there is every chance, one way and another, that the majority of those incriminated will wriggle out somehow, some of them to other countries, while many will disguise their identity with forged official papers and birth certificates and become good Germans overnight. They may not even need to resort to such devices, being confident that muddles, international disagreements or just the plain lapse of time, will look after them."

Mr. Ivor Thomas (Keighley) : "Is not the hon. and gallant Member a sloppy sentimentalist, shrinking from the logic of his own argument, which should be to exterminate the whole German race?"

Earl Winterton : "The Russians will do that."

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " The alternative solution of what to do with the Germans is, of course, 'leave it to the Russians.' In the meantime, I thought I had made it quite clear that I am all for exterminating as many war criminals as possible if you can catch them.

" Unless we are careful, after this war there will be as much retribution as there was after the last war, about our hanging the Kaiser, and so on. The only certain retribution is, after the war, to make all able-bodied Germans sweat and toil for years to build up those parts of the world that they have demolished, and for there no longer to be a German nation. The latter retribution also happens to be the only likely means of preventing the Germans, from within their own country, and under their own Government, some time getting together again to plan and eventually carry out another agonising period for mankind."

A number of M.P.s on that occasion, and subsequently, supported C-R's views, notably Earl Winterton, who had not previously been among his friendliest critics. In fact, later the noble Lord went so far as to declare C-R would be proved right, a prediction prompted perhaps by the recollection of how time had confirmed his attitude on other issues. An interesting feature here, as so often in the past, was the manner in which the speech was reported. George Strauss, the Labour Member for Lambeth North, an able exponent of the opposite view, dubbed C-R's proposals "extraordinary, nonsensical and dangerous"—and those were the adjectives employed in the headlines. They constituted about all the reference the speech received, and indicated that the Conservative journals were not particular from what party the criticism came so long as it could be used to disparage C-R.

It was near the end of this speech that he revealed to the House how the Home Office had prevented him raising certain disquieting questions in connection with the flying bombs. "I desire publicly to protest against the high-handed infringement of the rights of Members," he said, which was enough to set the Home Office again on his heels. Next day, however, he managed to catch out that Department and made, presumably, the speech he had not been allowed to make the day before. The Supplementary Vote of Credit was being taken, an occasion which leaves Members free to speak on almost anything, although few realise it. C-R, knowing the ins and outs of procedure by long impulsion to get familiar with them, seized the opportunity. He started by making a plea for hard-hit boarding-house keepers, then, looking round a somnolent and somewhat empty House and probably feeling the authorities to be off their guard and the moment propitious, suddenly threw off the gentle

mask and began to probe the holes the fly-bombs had blown in the official arrangements for the safety of the public. Said C-R : "The Prime Minister recently told us that he had known about the present flying bombs for the last six months. After hearing this, little John Citizen meekly asked, 'Why then were the deep shelters not ready?' It was a month after the arrival of the flying bomb before the last of the deep shelters was opened. The man in the street also wants to know why was not the evacuation of children advised or started if it was known six months ago that this menace was likely to occur, and why, during the last six months, have thousands of civil servants been brought back to London?"

Warming up, he castigated those responsible for the bewilderment and chaos resultant on the medley of warning signals. "It is most confusing to go round some of the big London stores," he said, "because they all have different signals. What with sirens, bells, whistles, klaxons, red buckets, cones, balls, balloons, big flags, small flags, flags at half mast, flags at full-mast, to say nothing of flying-socks—a most unnecessary confusion and anxiety are caused by this bizarre symphony." Then he made an interesting revelation. "Early in this war," he declared, "the man who invented tanks, Major W. G. Wilson, invented a jet-propelled flying-bomb simpler than the German model we know but nevertheless with a bombing accuracy hitherto unheard-of. The Government put every obstacle in the way of developing this British robot invention, with the result that we have been caught napping." Stressing the advantage that such a bomb would have afforded, he concluded : "This weapon would have been invaluable to us and our Allies, especially as we got nearer to the frontiers of Germany, and would have meant possibly the saving of hundreds and hundreds of heart-rending casualties to our airmen, for the ground defences round Berlin and other large German towns are formidable and will be more so as we close in and their anti-aircraft defences become concentrated." This proved to be the case.

Soon afterwards he was back again at the flying-bomb question, but this time the authorities were on the *qui vive* and again he was stopped. He was just able to call attention to "the urgent necessity of dealing adequately with looting from bombed premises," and remark that "the flying-bomb has now been with us for six weeks," when Lord Hinchingbrooke, an eminent member of the Tory Reform Committee, with obvious official approval, had the House put into secret session, thus depriving the electorate of the chance to learn what one of their representatives, if no other, had to say on a matter of grave public importance. Nevertheless, C-R managed to convey something of his concern in a letter to which the *Sunday Express* gave prominence

“ When blast damages houses the owners are often unable to look after their property,” said the letter. “ The result is that Southern England has become a looters’ paradise. Some of these human vultures, as soon as they spot a bomb bursting, rush to the scene in a motor car, or send their underlings, and under pretence of assisting, loot on a large scale. When order begins to prevail, the car moves off, serving as a depository for such things as cutlery, mats, radios and so on, one of the looters perhaps remaining to pocket small valuables like jewellery and watches or push them under the debris and return at night.” There were many incidents of this kind, and the Government could not have been unaware of it, but there were few, if any, arrests. C-R’s letter reminded how the penalty for this despicable conduct was death, which in other countries was put into effect. As long ago as 1940, he said, a circular had been sent to magistrates telling them to take a serious view of such offences, but now that the looting was worse than ever the Home Office was merely considering having warnings posted on the walls. “ Parliament,” the letter concluded, “ should have had an open debate on the matter long ago, for the subject entails no prejudice to security and the public has a right to know what is going on.”

What happened in that secret session is shrouded in the archives of State. It can only be presumed that the letter summarised what the writer had previously said in the House. But that his objections to secret sessions were shared by other folk was shown by a *Daily Mirror* protest, which said : “ The Parliamentary device of the Secret Session is one which is only justified if it is felt that, in open debate, something of vital interest to the enemy might be disclosed. What excuse there could have been this week for a discussion on looting to be held behind closed doors it is impossible to imagine. There has, most regrettably, been a certain amount of looting in this country, and everybody knows about it because cases have appeared in the Press. What is even more to the point is that the enemy also knows about it, and even if he did not it could do no conceivable harm for him to hear that we have in our midst a small number of despicable pilferers. If there was anything to be said in the House on the subject of looting surely its victims and the rest of the public were entitled to hear it. The principle of the Secret Session is a pernicious one and it would not be surprising if a feeling arose that such tricks are used not to keep something from the enemy but to keep it from the people in this country.”

No further comment was necessary and for C-R’s part he was given no opportunity to make any, for shortly afterwards the House packed up for the summer holidays. This at a time when the flying-bombs were increasing their devastation over southern

England and London was subject to the wail of the sirens both day and night. It is little wonder he felt impelled to make another protest against the frequency and length of parliamentary vacations. Fly-bombs were buzzing and crashing about the capital as he spoke. He was the more indignant because the Government which ordered all these long holidays was for ever impinging on the parliamentary time of Private Members on the score that there was no time for anything but Government business! "In the summer of 1940," he said, "we had two weeks recess. In 1941 and 1942 it was more than doubled to 4½ weeks. By 1943 it had grown to 6½, and now in 1944 we are to have 7½ weeks."* It was an astonishing situation. Here was a Government which under various wartime regulations kept men and women bound to their factories for as much as seven days a week under penalty of imprisonment, and was yet sending the Commons away for the third holiday of the year. Most M.P.s were content to have it so. Some thought the protest in the worst possible taste and demonstrated their disapproval by settling up a din of conversation beyond the Bar of the Chamber. This at once brought the game and lively Member for Ebbw Vale, Aneurin Bevan, to his feet on a Point of Order. "I think the hon. and gallant Member is entitled to have order," he said, "and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask Members to show the ordinary courtesy of this House to another, even though he may not be popular in certain circles." Earl Winterton also rebuked those who were "collecting below the Bar and talking at the top of their voices." But so Whip-bound were the majority of Members that only 28† had the nerve or desire to vote against the House dispersing for nearly two months. Yet it was just then, when the V.I.'s were registering their maximum of slaughter and devastation, that M.P.s should have remained at their posts.

Had the Commons remained to keep watch during that trying period the authorities would have been kept on their toes and perhaps found some means of avoiding many of the casualties. Moreover, the time could have been employed to investigate among many other things the housing tangle; the mirage of the Portal shack might have been exposed long before it actually was, and less time lost in providing for the homeless. C-R, practising what he preached, spent the Recess in London, doing what he could to alleviate his constituents' troubles, and they

* See Appendix, page 285.

† A Bevan, Norman Bower, F. G. Bowles, W. J. Brown, A. Cunningham-Reid, Clement Davies, R. J. Davies, S. O. Davies, T. E. N. Driberg, A. Edwards, W. Gallacher, L. Haden Guest, T. L. Horabin, W. D. Kendall, H. M. Lawson, C. C. Poole, D. N. Pritt, G. L. Reakes, E. Shinwell, R. W. Sorensen, R. R. Stokes, G. R. Strauss, Mrs. Mavis Tate, E. Walkden, C. F. White, Earl Winterton, Richard Acland, Edgar Granville.

had plenty, including one of the capital's worst bomb incidents. Said the *Marylebone Mercury*: "Captain Cunningham-Reid has taken up with the appropriate Ministries the cases of a great number of Marylebone residents who are seeking help on such varied matters as looting, compassionate leave, pensions, deferments, evacuation and many other war-time problems covered by regulations which the ordinary citizen cannot fully understand." He also spent a night at the fly-bomb defences, as he had done during the earlier blitz, when he became a welcome and cheerful visitor at some of the gun-sites. "During the Recess," added the *Mercury*, "he has regularly attended the meetings of London M.P.s with the Regional Commissioners when fly-bomb problems have been discussed with the authorities concerned."

Marylebonians' appreciation of their Member's assistance during those difficult days—and nights—frequently found oblique expression in facetious inquiries as to the whereabouts of the rival prospective candidate from Swindon. Sir William, however, was still in South Africa. Which rendered Wing-Commander James's unfounded sneer concerning C-R's whereabouts more than a little grotesque.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

TO many people's surprise the war was still raging when at the end of September 1944, M.P.s drifted back to London from their two months' holiday. In the lobbies the wise were once more whispering their hopeful forecasts. It would be all over by Christmas if not before, they said. Like the alleged military experts and air correspondents who spread their illusions with a confidence enhanced by every demonstrated error, a large number of M.P.s—probably the majority—showed throughout the war an amazing capacity for self-deception. They returned to town after every Recess fully convinced the last battle would be fought before the next vacation. Pretending to a burdensome load of inside information, they would take the inquiring newshawks aside and with an air of profound secrecy tell *sotto voce* of the great surprises in store. In return the pressmen would whisper the latest news from mysterious contacts in Paris who had got their information from Geneva, via Stockholm, after it had been picked up in Washington from a secret radio transmitter in Tokio which had quoted a very confidential report from Madrid. Then the M.P. told his colleagues under his breath what the newsman had said, and the newsman in some secluded corner of pub or cafe repeated to his cronies, much embellished, what the M.P. had said. Finally, after percolating through to the M.O.I. the whole phoney concoction would be plastered in the newspapers as a sure sign that the Germans were exhausted and all was over bar the shouting. Thus is "news" fabricated.

Most M.P.s had been fooled—or fooled themselves—from the early days of the war. But he is a rare politician who admits himself to have been deluded. Most of them prefer to go on kidding themselves and their constituents until the shoddy edifice of illusion topples in a storm of reality, as happened in 1939. Just as that disaster was chiefly the result of the parliamentarians' blind belief in their own percipience, so now on the resumption of the session in September 1944, many of them, blandly unmindful of the savage rebukes scattered in the trail of the previous five years, betrayed a determined reluctance to face up to the problems inseparable from the peace. They were quite certain that the end was very near, yet looked askance at the idea of preparing for its coming.

Almost the first business of the resumed session was a debate on the war situation. As soon as Premier Churchill had finished, the Member for Marylebone was on his feet trying to secure a

little of the time that remained. He was unlucky. The Speaker's eye fell on Sir Edward Grigg, who before being removed from the War Office in 1942 had denounced C-R's agitation on behalf of the Services as "treason." As an ex-Minister, Sir Edward considered himself privileged to talk out much of the remaining time. Seeing their chances vanishing, many Members impatiently wrapped their views in interjection. C-R cut in with a suggestion that M.P.s should agree among themselves as to the shape of the new Europe, to which Sir Edward replied, somewhat archly, that it was too early to talk about future European frontiers.

"To my mind," said C-R when at last he was called, "that was a most extraordinary answer. If it is not right to talk about frontiers now, when will it be right?" Noting the comings and goings of United Nations leaders, he made the point that it would be no good discussing the matter later because these leaders were just then making decisions that would thereafter bind the Commons. "If ever there was a time to discuss such matters," he repeated with emphasis, "it is surely now." Inspired, no doubt, by the easy target the old enemy presented—it was like stealing the baby's milk—he referred to "the hon. Gentleman's magnificent platitudes that 'Germany shall not rise again to produce new wars' and that 'the Great Powers must keep united,' and observed that it would be much more helpful if he had told the House how this was to be achieved.

C-R, enjoying himself, continued to deride his "hon. Friend's" logic, notably "a wonderful peroration in which he asked the House to keep foreign policy out of the arena of party politics"—always the panacea of those who regard everybody's politics as party politics except their own. "What happens if we do not agree with the party politics of others?" asked C-R. "Is it only the Government that is to be allowed to say what foreign policy shall be? I never heard such an extraordinary exhortation."

It was unkind to make sport of Grigg's unconscious prejudices in this way, but perhaps he deserved it. Anyway, the House was enjoying the fun when Dr. Russell Thomas, a Liberal who gets Torier and Torier, added to it by chipping in that a "wrong interpretation is being put on the Prime Minister's words." To the Doctor's embarrassment and the greater amusement of the rest, C-R thanked him for explaining what the Prime Minister meant to say, but reminded that the man under the hammer happened to be Grigg, and continued: "It was because of the past complacency of this House about foreign politics that foreign politics were kept out of the arena of party politics, and it was that very reason why we got into this war. Practically nobody then took any interest in foreign politics and the re-

arming of Germany. And now the right hon. Gentleman who has held important positions in the Government is telling us the same old story again. All I can say for his speech is that it was a long collection of beautifully phrased but useless generalities which took up 50 minutes of the time of the House. . . .”

Lady Astor : “ Is that not true of most speeches ? ”

C-R : “ The noble Lady is speaking from experience.”

When the laughter had subsided, C-R left Grigg—whose speech must have pleased the party chiefs, for he was appointed shortly afterwards Resident Minister in the Middle East—and turned to the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force, familiarly known by its collated initials as SHAEF. He told how he had asked SHAEF for permission to go to Paris to investigate the allegation that big business Americans were being allowed to get into France under cover of United States uniforms, while their British rivals were kept out. At this Lady Astor again showed symptoms of amusement. “ What experience has the hon. and gallant Member that they should send him to Paris to investigate such a delicate matter ? ” she asked. “ Impetuosity has always been the Noble Lady’s charm,” cracked back C-R. Silence secured, he continued :

“ I told SHAEF that if I found that the allegations were correct, I intended to come down to this House at the end of this week and to say so, and alternatively, if I found that the newspaper which had originally made the allegation had done so without sufficient evidence, I was also going to say so, and to add a few words about the impropriety of a newspaper doing such an irresponsible thing.” The day following his application, he explained, he was rung up and flattered by the information that it had been decided his application was a matter of high policy and therefore had to be referred to higher powers in France, and that in all probability he would get an answer on the following day. “ A week has gone by and apparently no decision has been arrived at,” he continued, “ because I have not heard anything yet. If SHAEF have nothing to hide they will undoubtedly in the near future provide me with facilities for this journey. If, on the other hand, it is true that American business men have been given priority to go to Paris—bankers, car-salesmen and others—the House will agree that serious repercussions may ensue. Leaving out of the question altogether the unfairness of such procedure, I think the way that ordinary folk will look at it is that if Americans are going to conduct their business affairs in competition with their Allies in this manner while the war is still on, what in Heaven’s name is going to happen after the war ? ”

Here Dr. Russell Thomas, no doubt smarting from his earlier mistake and believing his opportunity had come, rose and

demanding to know from the Deputy Speaker whether it was in order for a British M.P. to discuss what the American Government might do, and said that as the speech was entirely mischievous would the Deputy-Speaker put a stop to it. To this outburst the Deputy-Speaker replied that the speech was perfectly in order. On his feet again, the Member for Marylebone, who was in form, this time squashed the Doctor with the reminder that of his two interjections neither was well-founded. "I am not talking about the American Government," he went on "but about SHAEF. As to his suggestion that it is out of order for such a subject to be raised, I would point out that it is very much in order, for if the allegations are true it means that every American business man who goes to Paris, helped by SHAEF and these unfair means, can reduce employment for our workers over here in the future. I think that is a vital matter which should concern Members of Parliament, including the hon. Gentleman who interjected.

"If this kind of thing is going on in war-time, what hope is there for a real peace, which can only go hand in hand with trust and unity between the victorious nations, as we have heard so often during this debate? If this allegation should turn out to be true, what an indictment it is going to be against private enterprise which more and more is being accused, sometimes quite unjustifiably, of creating this very kind of international friction, which those who deride private enterprise say leads to war."

Then he made a slight pass at SHAEF's head man, General Eisenhower, who was said to be willing to investigate the charges. "It is SHAEF which is being accused," said C-R, "and it is SHAEF which is making the investigations. In other words, the accused, who is making inquiries about himself, is then to make a report on himself, and subsequently, if necessary, pass judgment on himself. I merely mention that in additional reply to an interjection that was made just now and to make it clear that SHAEF must not be surprised or offended if an ordinary Member of this House desires to make independent inquiries. I trust that in the circumstances the necessary facilities will be afforded me."

¶ Whether the requested permit ever arrived the records do not disclose, but C-R, anticipating the excuses that might be offered, went on to answer them in advance. If it were contended that to let one M.P. visit France would raise a demand from a lot, his answer was, 'Why not?' It was the business of M.P.s to get to grips with the facts in the liberated countries. A whole flock of non-war reporters, females and otherwise, had been across the Channel, as well as Trade Union leaders and quite a few of the Commons staff, also the learned Clerks at the

Table and the Speaker, in fact practically everybody except, as he put it, "the poor bloody M.P." He went on: "The M.P. seems to be the Cinderella of the show, who apparently counts for nothing and can be ignored. We certainly shall be ignored so long as we all meekly sit around smiling and submitting to this kind of treatment." When he said it was eminently advisable that every M.P. should be given the chance to get first-hand information, some Member asked "Why?" To which C-R angrily replied, "What is the use of the House discussing the Dumbarton Oaks, Hot Springs or Bretton Woods proposals or any plans for European relief and safety if Members did not know what they were talking about. There has been far too much ignorance in Parliament in the past and the country is paying heavily for it."

There followed what was afterwards recognised as a remarkable piece of far-sightedness, which later resulted in SHAEF conducting M.P.s round the horror camps, such as Buchenwald, which fell into Allied hands in April 1945. "In the very near future we shall be asked," said C-R, "to confirm what the powers-that-be have decided shall be the future of Germany. Before doing that, might it not be better for posterity if some of us in this House were to have the opportunity of visiting the scenes of German atrocities and were to see for ourselves what fiends we have to guard against in the future. Let us go and have a look at these places, not just say 'I wonder if these reports were exaggerated.' Let us have an opportunity of seeing the torture chambers of Paris and some of those sinister concentration camps that have now come into our possession. It may well be that such sights might affect the views of our most ardent forgive and forget idealists." He concluded by exclaiming, "On our decisions may depend the future peace of the world and the safety and welfare of those whom we have the responsibility of representing in Parliament. Therefore, I say it is essential we should not make blind decisions."

A rumble of applause in a thin House seems not to have gone unmarked by the Treasury Bench, for soon afterwards the Government allowed M.P.s to travel to liberated countries and observe conditions on the spot. Fellow Members complimented C-R on his effective speech but the Press gave him no credit, though the subject was considered sufficiently important for a good deal of editorial comment. *A propos* of which, somebody on *The Leader* was moved to ask, "Why No Mention?"

"Is there a ban on the name of Cunningham-Reid in some London newspaper offices?" the journal boldly asked. "Sub-editors who deal with these matters indignantly deny the suggestion, and I believe them. Yet I can well understand the owner of the name feeling a trifle sore occasionally because of the way

he goes unreported. When Mr. Morrison was speaking in Parliament about the people who are, unlike M.P.s, allowed to go to France, he said (quoting *The Times* report) 'The people who can go are cases of a compassionate nature, sometimes of a pretty serious and dramatic character.' Captain Cunningham-Reid: 'Like Noel Coward.' (Laughter and cheers.) I searched in vain in the rest of the London papers for a mention of the Captain's name. Most of them lost the joke completely in their garbled accounts. The rest referred to him as 'A Member.'"

The Leader scribe was correct. He was also a generous fellow if he believed the sub-editors' "indignant denials." But perhaps there was only a qualified ban, which allowed them to splash C-R's name when there was anything that could possibly be construed to his discredit, but which counselled complete burial when anything cropped up in his favour. Examples of the first kind abound in reports already quoted. Here is an example of the second kind. On June 9, 1944, the following story appeared in the *Daily Express* :

WHO PAYS THE JUDGE ? The Minister !

M.P.s urged in the House of Commons last night that farmers dispossessed on the recommendation of War Agricultural Executive Committees should have some right of appeal.

It was news to some of them, as Mr. Critchley (Cons., Edge Hill) admitted, that the farmer loses his home as well as his farm without the appeal to a court which any tenant has under the Rent Restrictions Acts.

Mr. Loverseed (Common Wealth, Eddisbury) complained that Mr. Wyndham Hartnell, an owner-occupier of 200 acres, not merely a tenant, was dispossessed of Moor Farm, Westfield, near Hastings, by the East Sussex Committee.

Mr. Godfrey Nicholson (Cons., Farnham) said advocates of State control, such as the Common Wealth Party, could hardly

complain when the State used its power to snuff people out. The Committees had done very good work, but there should be some appeal from their divisions.

Mr. David Quibell (Soc., Brigg), said every rural M.P. knew of cases where mistakes had been made.

Mr. Hutchinson (Cons., Ilford) suggested there should be a local inquiry, with power to call witnesses, to which any dispossessed farmer could appeal.

Mr. Tom Williams, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, said Mr. Hartnell was repeatedly warned by the committee. He denied that the county committees were judge and jury. Mr. Hudson, the Minister, was responsible in every case of dispossession, and he acted only after advice from the Land Commissioner.

"Who pays the Land Commissioner?" he was asked.

"The Minister of Agriculture," Mr. Williams admitted,

The point was that the dispossessed farmer did not always have a square deal because the Land Commissioner who made the decision was paid by the Ministry which acted on the decision. The newspaper recognised the force of the point by playing it up in the bold black headline—"Who Pays The Judge?" But as to who secured the revealing answer from the Government, not a word. After mentioning all the other names in bold type no credit was given the man who had extracted such an admission and incidentally provided the head-line. He was, of course, the Member for Marylebone. That is the way of the sup-Press.

It is impossible to believe the omission due to anything but design. Newspapers seldom commit the sin of oversight. But it is easy to imagine how the incident would have been presented had it occurred in the days when C-R was a budding hope of the Conservative Party, or had he still remained their hope. His name with a high mark for quick wits would have carried the emphasis of the first line, and that of his wife, "the rich heiress, sister of Lady Louis Mountbatten who is married to the King's nephew"—such was the phrase—would have been dragged in to add to the glamour of the occasion. There was no suppression at that time! Witty or woolly, almost every word he uttered had to have a show. Then he scintillated in a welter of newspaper banality, now he was either excoriated or smothered under its ban.

ROMANCE ROUTS RUMOUR

C-R might well have felt sore, as *The Leader* remarked, about going unreported. He had reason; and even more reason to lament the misreportings. But in matters social "the handsomest man in Mayfair" was still good for a catching headline, when the reporters could catch him. He seems to have been much too fast for them around the middle of 1944, for it was not until October that the gossip boys got on the trail of his new romance. At one time and another they had hinted at various matrimonial possibilities, particularly his widely-forecast hitch-up with the renowned Doris Duke, outrageously wealthy heiress to her father's tobacco fortune. But the newsboys had manifestly been entirely off the track.

Following the celebrated Chancery dispute, C-R in 1939 divorced his wife, and so lost his right to a sum of £3,000 a year to which, as her husband, he would have been entitled in the event of her pre-deceasing him. The co-respondent was a French film actor, Henri Garat, who a few months afterwards married Countess Maria Chernicheff Besobrasoff. Subsequently the former Mrs. C-R married Mr. Laurie Gardner. This marriage was dissolved in 1943, and in 1944 she married again, her third choice being Lord Delamere. For five years C-R eschewed further matrimonial risk.

In April 1941 the question of the C-R children, young Michael and Noel, loomed large in an action brought by C-R in the Divorce Division. Mr. Justice Langton summed up. The main outcome was that a third of Mrs. Gardner's fortune after her demise was to go to Michael and Noel in equal proportions. Had this disposition not been made, in the event of Mrs. Gardner having subsequent issue she could, did she so desire, cut out of her will her children by C-R. It also came out in the action that C-R was "saddled with the expenses of the education of both children," the elder of whom at first, and subsequently the younger, had been placed in his custody. At the outbreak of war the boys were sent to America where, according to information seeping round at the time of the Honolulu episode, they were being cared for by Doris Duke, whose married name was Cromwell.

It was this that put the newshawks off the scent, and led to the belief that the lady was on the way to becoming the second Mrs. C-R. Had things worked out that way few would have disapproved his choice. Many no doubt would have envied

his luck. Wealthy and witty, with a willowy figure, and possessing an oriental beauty, she is known to Americans as an unusual and distinctively decorative personage. Newsmen like her despite her persistent refusal to face the camera or play up to interview. When harried by newshounds late in 1944 she was reported as saying : " Sorry, boys, but you ought to know me by now."

Doris Duke had been trying to get a divorce, and her husband had been doing all he could to prevent her. Eventually she got a divorce and secured a war job that took her across the Atlantic, and the American press and radio announced that she had gone over to marry " Captain Bobby."

C-R's traducers were only waiting for the announcement to be made to say, " There you are—at it again ! Not content with marrying the richest girl in England he has now married the richest girl in the world ! "

But the disconcerting C-R once again displayed his annoying habit of confounding the critics, and to the bewilderment of Anglo-American society announced that he had been married for some time to an English girl—Angela Williams, daughter of a Royal Navy Commander. Swiftly the Press got after the new Mrs. C-R, a strikingly pretty and vivacious brunette. " There is not much I can tell you," she is reported to have said, " except that I have the distinction of belonging to that minority who haven't a penny in the world." Though charmingly spoken, the information was little enough, but he would be a poor scribe who in such circumstances failed to find the magic angle of romance. So having caught the game, the *Daily Mirror* on October 27th, 1944, told the story under a splash headline guaranteed to catch the millions :

" ' MOST ELIGIBLE ' M.P. WED BLITZ GIRL IN SECRET.

" The blitz of 1940 brought romance once again into the life of Captain Alec Cunningham-Reid, sometimes described as the ' most eligible M.P. in the House of Commons.'

" His bride, Miss Angela Williams, a Marylebone girl and daughter of a naval commander, was doing ambulance duty during the height of a London blitz when they first met.

" Captain Cunningham-Reid was touring the Marylebone constituency at the time, and became interested when he saw the dark, attractive girl who was working with one of the ambulances which he had himself presented to the district.

" Yesterday, at a large meeting of his constituents, he announced that they had been married secretly some months ago

"Mrs. Cunningham-Reid, who is in her middle 'twenties, will be stepmother to Michael and Noel, the children of Captain Cunningham-Reid and his first wife, from whom he obtained a divorce in 1940.

"The first Mrs. Cunningham-Reid was formerly Miss Ruth Mary Ashley, the daughter of Lord Mount Temple, and she and her sister, Lady Louis Mountbatten, jointly inherited £6,000,000 left by their grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel.

"Captain Cunningham-Reid has been the centre of many heated political arguments both inside and outside the House of Commons."

The same evening the *Star* elaborated the story :

"AN M.P.'S SECRET.

"Capt. Cunningham-Reid, M.P. for St. Marylebone, kept the secret of his marriage to Miss Angela Williams well.

"It was no easy matter. The wedding took place some time ago, but owing to the flying-bombs it was inadvisable to hold a big meeting of constituents to whom he wanted to make the first announcement. Even reports from America that he was off to Cairo to marry Mrs. Doris Duke Cromwell, the tobacco heiress, would not make him break his silence.

"Miss Angela Williams, tall, dark, and with an unusually gentle speaking voice, first met Capt. Cunningham-Reid in the war. A voluntary Red Cross nurse, she was one of the workers with the Units he had presented to his constituency.

"She served through the worst of the raids, and then her health broke down. When her doctor ordered her an open-air life she worked on a farm.

"Now she is going to do her share in Capt. Cunningham-Reid's parliamentary work."

And the *Evening Standard* said :

"Mrs. Cunningham-Reid told a meeting of her husband's constituents that 'Marylebone has always had leanings towards an independent M.P.—and so have I.' She promised to help her husband in the division. She will also help on the farm he has bought in Warwickshire, for during the war she has worked on the land.

"Captain Cunningham-Reid's two sons by his first marriage are in America. His marriage to an English wife and his newly acquired estate are taken in Marylebone as a further indication that at the General Election he will as an Independent try to hold the seat he won as a Conservative."

Typical of the fluster across the Atlantic was an amusing article in the *American Weekly*. Packing into the caption as much as ordinarily goes into a column the *A.W.* yelled :—

"CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID'S NEW ROMANTIC SOMERSAULT.

"RUTH MARY ASHLEY MADE THE CAPTAIN HER CINDERELLA MAN AND NOW HE'S MADE ANGELA WILLIAMS HIS CINDERELLA BRIDE.

"ENGLAND'S DEVOTEE OF THE UNEXPECTED AGAIN MARRIES, BUT THIS TIME FOR LOVE AND LOVE ONLY—AND ONCE MORE STANDS THE LONDON GOSSIPS ON THEIR HOT AND BOTHERED EARS.

"Capt. Alexander Cunningham-Reid, the man who does a lot of flip-backs but always lands on his feet, stormy petrel of England's Parliament, once more has upset the social dope in London.

"Even as it was being whispered that his wedding to Doris Duke Cromwell, the American tobacco heiress, was a foregone conclusion, he married a little-known Londoner named Angela Williams.

"Though Miss Williams is young, pretty, charming, she can scarcely claim any great social or financial distinction. So one is forced to the conclusion that the Captain's interest in her was fanned by love alone.

"In another man this might not have been surprising, but on the basis of past performance, he had been judged to be the type that seldom lets the heart rule the head. In fact, his apparently unwavering concentration on a practical attitude towards life is exactly what has made his conduct seem to be so extraordinary.

"Time after time his cricket-playing compatriots had been taken off guard by the lengths to which he went to attain his ends. After years of this sort of thing they finally thought they had him figured out. He was one of the world's foremost realists, they said, when—off he went and married unrealistically—and for love.

"Angela Williams is not only his bride, but also one of his staunchest constituents, hailing, as she does, from the Marylebone district which he represents in Commons. Early in the war he presented St. Marylebone parish with several ambulances to one of which she was attached as a full-time nurse.

"Except for bombings and his famous junket to Hawaii (where he seemed to be making a bid for the favour of Doris Duke Cromwell) the Captain's romance with the pretty nurse flowered uninterruptedly and unostentatiously, a rarity for him.

"A few weeks ago it became known that their marriage, also, had taken place unostentatiously—in fact in secret. The Captain explained that he had hesitated to proceed openly for fear of endangering lives. Crowds, he pointed out modestly, would have swarmed to witness the ceremony; robot bombs might have fallen; and people might have been killed."

"Londoners digested this explanation with mixed feelings of gratitude and unsatisfied curiosity. But they're all sure of one thing: he's once more caught all the gossips flatfooted."

So it appears the deeds of this enigmatic fellow were not always determined by material considerations. Though he still maintains a pleasant flat in Grosvenor House and smacks of affluence, when down at their small estate in the country the C-Rs and their baby John are said to live in unpretentious style in a converted farmhouse, a place whose external charms have been known to send visitors into raptures and the internal appointments of which lack nothing in modern comfort. His infrequent sojourns there doubtless come as a welcome relief from the storms of the metropolis. Apparently he is keen on farming and potters about with amateurish enthusiasm, occasionally turning a furrow or shooting a pigeon—all of which must strike him as a sharp contrast to the ostentations of Six Mile Bottom with its 8,000 acres, retinues of servants and keepers, astronomical bags and the ungainly mansion intermittently packed with titled hangers-on.

In town, nevertheless, his fur collar in meet season is still triumphant, but he never wears a hat, an omission to which he ascribes his thick thatch. He invariably, though, wears a cigar, even excelling Churchill—for he is reputed to keep on puffing even when ski-ing down mountains at a furious rate. Though he plugs in Parliament and on platform the case of the man in the street he disdains to dress down to the part and makes no bones about enjoying the advantages that financial plenitude affords. "I am fortunate enough to be able to enjoy many of the good things of life, at least as much as taxation and the law permit," he told a meeting of constituents early in 1945. "That fact also enables me sometimes to help a lame dog over the stile. I shall continue to do so—and to enjoy myself—as long as I can." His is a frank and disarming philosophy. It also seems that the facts do not belie the profession, for the fiercest of his critics have never cast doubt on the amount or sincerity of his benefactions.

The same characteristics and his lack of airs and graces may account for his popularity down in the rustic retreat. There, towards the end of 1944, he became of all unlikely things a rural district councillor, gaining the representation of Butlers



Marston, Warwickshire, by a substantial majority over Colonel Pepys, the Chairman of the local Bench. No sooner on the council than he began to make things hum, or so the locals said.

The *Stratford-on-Avon Herald* divulged that when C-R "took his seat" at the Shipston-on-Stour Council House he regaled his colleagues with a "maiden speech." He asked those who had heard that he was sometimes a stormy petrel to disabuse their minds at once of that idea. He hoped they would find that he was as tractable as a lamb—when everything was going right. The Council had a great reputation for always being fair and efficient, and he was looking forward to working with his new colleagues in harmony and sweet reasonableness, provided of course that it was in the best interest of "that distinguished part of the hemisphere he represented, Butlers Marston." This example of pleasant facetiousness was apparently appreciated by his fellow councillors, possibly because they did not read between the lines.

After this felicitous opening the council got down to a long discussion of the main business, which centred round the method of painting "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" outside Shipston's public lavatories. The new member made no contribution.

It seems that when a public figure becomes "news" the papers see to it that he stays that way until they write up his obituary notice.

Early in 1945 the *Sunday Pictorial* presented to its picture-hungry readers a full length portrait of C-R attired opulently in pre-war evening clothes, complete with cigar of grandiose proportions. The *S.P.* was not, however, merely offering its feminine readership a new "pin-up" heart-throb. The reason for the glamour-picture became clear on reading the full page article into which it was inset. The heading "He's Started Another Row" promised to reveal at least a national upheaval, but actually the text had to do with a parish pump affair in the heart of Warwickshire. It seemed the tenants of Council houses in the district of Shipston-on-Stour who had rooms to spare had been told by the local Council that they must help to relieve the serious overcrowding in the villages. Not a very drastic war-time proposal to the sheltered inhabitants of villages which has never heard the whistle of a bomb or the wail of a siren. Hardly worth sending a "special correspondent" down to investigate it. But send a newshawk down was just what the *Pictorial* did, and as luck would have it he discovered a smashing "angle" on the otherwise picayune story. For lo! and behold, the "villain" of this rustic piece was none other than the newsworthy Captain Cunningham-Reid.

Yes, the lone wolf of Westminster had only been masquerading as a lamb on the Parish Council of Shipston-on-Stour. And it was he, alleged the *Pictorial*—he, the rich Warwickshire landowner, who wanted to inflict this monstrous “injustice” on the cottage dwellers of peaceful Shipston. Hence the portrait of the man in dress clothes.

But like a good many other “stories” about C-R this particular narrative was a complete travesty of the facts. In the first place, C-R did not “start the row.” (The *Pictorial* amended this headline in its second edition.) The matter had been raised by other members of the Council. And far from being the “villain of the piece,” C-R was in actual fact cast in the role of the hero. For the Council had nearly decided to serve notices to quit on tenants who lived alone in Council houses too big for them, when C-R stepped in with the much less drastic counter-proposal that these tenants should be given the option of letting their vacant rooms to those who were overcrowded. And he added a further safeguard that if this involved undue hardship on the tenants concerned it should not take effect. Thus, by his prompt action, he had come to the rescue of the threatened tenants. But the *Pictorial* did not say so; neither did it say that C-R himself had arranged accommodation privately for some of the overcrowded in his own particular village.

C-R immediately presented these facts to the *Pictorial* and it is to the credit of that journal that in its next issue it printed the correct version in full, adding as its own apology that “we regret we were not in possession of these facts when we published our article last week—they do, of course, throw another light on the matter.”

Thus another “smear” was wiped out, but the episode shows that once the Press gets its teeth into a public figure it never lets go.

For quite another reason the good country folk of Butlers Marston were well pleased with their representative. It appears that for years their all-absorbing grievance had been the mud which in winter coagulated around the tap in the centre of the village green, causing many an oath and wetting the women’s feet. A wet and weighty problem, it was, however, soon settled. Said an enthusiastic inhabitant: “The Captain had only been our representative for a short time when the Council lorry arrived, and before we knew where we were we had a fine concrete surround to our tap.” The villagers were so impressed with the prompt service that the Captain is as good as in for life.

RETALIATION AND RETRIBUTION

COMPELLING as must have been the appeal of the sequestered retreat, C-R showed no desire to settle down in rustic solitude or to play the role of local squire except at occasional week-ends, and before the scribes had finished their "inside stories" of his new romance he was again making the parliamentary headlines.

The old gang, up to their old tricks, pulled him up with a "count" in the middle of a well-reasoned speech on the importance of taking adequate steps to prevent the Germans preparing another war. The "count" stratagem was so obviously employed for his special discomfiture that at last one newspaper felt obliged to protest. Just as *The Leader* had directed attention to the ban on mention of his name, so the *Evening Star* now spoke out sharply at the gagging of his speeches. "Freedom of speech has to a considerable extent been taken away from a Member of Parliament by his colleagues," said the *Star*. "Parliament, the institution which has the primary responsibility of safeguarding the rights of the individual, is curbing the rights of Captain Cunningham-Reid. This is the plain unvarnished truth." Then it listed some of the occasions.

The number and circumstances of these vindictive exhibitions would well-nigh fill a volume, yet the victim seems to have suffered it all without much complaint, and had never once retaliated by calling a count against his tormentors. It was not that he had lacked opportunity. Almost any day he could have taken advantage of the thin attendance to direct the Speaker's attention to the absence of a quorum. All too frequently were fewer than forty M.P.s to be found in the whole Palace of Westminster, let alone in the Chamber.

At last, however, C-R tired of turning the other cheek. The party high-ups, as one Member remarked, may be festooned with old school ties but they only play the game so long as it goes to their own advantage. C-R therefore resorted to tactics as tough as their own. These did not include knocking anybody down, although he might have felt justified even in that course seeing the excellent results that had ensued after the Locker-Lampson fracas. But he drew the line at further fist-cuffs and instead constituted himself a one-man Opposition and set out to obstruct official business right and left.

The day after the party hacks had worked this latest gag on him, he sat quietly in the House till lunch-time and then, when

Members were noisily enjoying the delights provided by the kitchen committee, drew the Speaker's attention to the fact that there were not forty Members in the Chamber. At once the bells began to clang, policemen shouted "Count!" and Whips and messengers rushed in all directions. Anxious Members, risking indigestion, left their lunch and ran puffing along the corridors cursing the inadequacy of the two minutes permitted to make up the quorum. According to the rules, if the necessary forty are not mustered in that time business has to be suspended, usually for the day. That throws the Government programme out of gear as well as creating trouble for the Whips. In addition, it exposes the lackadaisical manner in which parliamentary affairs are conducted and reveals how few M.P.s take an interest in what is going on in the House itself.

Having dashed into the Chamber, the interrupted lunchers nursed their hunger during the required count and then trooped angrily back to their cold meal. C-R, however, remained in his place and after allowing them time for another bite again called for a count. Affecting an attitude of high indignation, he rose to a point of order. "I must protest," he said, raising a hand in one of his rare gestures. "I think it is disgraceful that there are only fifteen Members here during the discussion of this important Ministry of Social Insurance Bill, and I desire to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that there is not even a quorum present." The Speaker naturally demurred. He did not want to waste time on another count, which was precisely what C-R did want to do. Said the Speaker: "I satisfied myself that there was a quorum a few minutes ago, and it is now just a quarter past one; so we cannot have another count."

At this C-R responded that he was only acting in conformity with established practice. "According to the rules and regulations," he said, "I am aware it is within your discretion, Sir; not to call a second count provided you have recently satisfied yourself about the numbers present. I have looked up precedents on this matter and I should like to draw your attention to the latest reference in *Erskine May*. On 25th February, 1887, which is the last reference on the question of how long is 'recently,' Mr. Speaker allowed two counts within three minutes, and after two minutes a third was disallowed, on the ground that he had recently satisfied himself that there was a quorum present. If we go by precedents at all, I suggest that considerably more than three minutes have gone by since the last count and therefore a second should be allowed."

Mr. Speaker: "It may have been more than three minutes ago, but I do not think that the House should be unnecessarily

counted in this way. In any case I feel sure that there are further precedents, and the Speaker has refused to have a second count within a few minutes of the first."

Dr. Russell Thomas : " As the hon. and gallant Member has called attention to the performance of their duties by hon. Members of this House, may I point out that since the last Recess, I have not noticed the hon. and gallant Member in his place more than a few times ? "

Captain Cunningham-Reid : " If you are going to allow remarks like that, Sir, I would like to state that the reason the hon. Member has not seen me is that he has so rarely been here."

Mr. Speaker : " We will leave that subject now."

Undaunted, C-R tried another tack. He evidently knew the rules. " A serious principle has arisen, and I desire to discuss it," he said. " May I call your attention, Sir, to the fact that I spy strangers ? " Whereupon, pursuant to Standing Orders, the Speaker put the question " That Strangers be ordered to withdraw."

The episode showed that given courage and ability a man may still get something of his own back on those desirous of shutting him up. If C-R, despite his being fortified with a knowledge of precedents dating back to the last century, had failed to persuade the Speaker to call another count so soon, he had nevertheless succeeded in holding up business for quite an appreciable time ; and when this was no longer possible he simply resorted to the ruse which Viscount Hinchinbrooke had used against him during the debate on looting. That caused further delay, for when any Member " spies strangers," the public and press galleries have to be cleared and a division is called to decide whether the proceedings shall continue in secret so that a spy or other dangerous stranger shall not hear what is going on ! The device is an old one and rarely employed. But since it had been used on him, C-R was fully justified in using it against his opponents.

The consequence was that Members, their indignation threatening havoc to their digestions, were once more hurried in from the dining room. Naturally, they did not feel kindly towards C-R. But they were even less kindly disposed towards the Whips who had allowed the previous day's folly and thus laid them open to this form of retribution. Nor had C-R finished with them yet. Much to the anxiety of the Whips, he did not go out for lunch but remained in his place, a constant source of possible trouble. Members had therefore to be kept within call, and as it was a Friday, when most of them depart early for the weekend, they didn't like it, and there were angry

mutterings about the Whips. But the Whips insisted on their staying "because that blighter is on the war path."

The blighter, noticing what was happening, manœuvred to put them off their guard, or so it seemed. But whether he was really interested in the subject under discussion or feigning in order to lull them into a false sense of security none but himself is ever likely to know. To the debate in progress on war criminals he gave or simulated rapt attention and eventually got in an impassioned speech on the subject. Convinced now that he would not attempt to count heads when he himself was so interested, the Whips allowed their sheep to slip quietly away. But the Member for Marylebone was evidently not so absorbed in the subject as to miss the wanderings among the flock. The moment he felt that fewer than 40 remained on the premises, he butted into a speech by the Foreign Under-Secretary and shamming a supreme seriousness said: "Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to the fact that we are listening to a very important reply and that more hon. Members ought to hear it; and in order to get them here I beg to draw your attention to the fact that there is not a quorum present."

That put the cat among the pigeons once more. Scurrying hither and thither, the Whips swept the smoking rooms and libraries, peeped into cabinets and cubby holes, but fell short of the odd few necessary to make up the quorum. Though the afternoon was still young, business in the Mother of Parliaments was brought abruptly to a standstill. C-R had caught them out with a vengeance. And in the process he created another record, for never before in its modern history had the House been counted out while a Minister of the Crown was speaking. The Whips were defeated. Dejected, they went home. So did C-R, but with a jaunty step and a seraphic air. Revenge, probably sweet, was certainly well deserved.

Encouraged by success, he apparently resolved to keep the ball rolling. Next sitting day he was along at the House in time for Prayers, a sign the Whips considered ominous, and the more so because under his arm he carried a copy of the voluminous *Erskine May*, the parliamentarian's Bible of procedure and precedents. Everybody was warned to be on the alert. All day C-R waged a war of nerves. While he sat silent in his place the Whips became more and more jittery. "If only he would do something," they whispered. "What is he up to?" But the sinister C-R gave them no satisfaction, and no rest either. Late in the afternoon he was called out of the House, and soon afterwards word went round that he had secured the Adjournment again and for that very day. Since Members have often to wait weeks for an Adjournment they were amazed

and not a little annoyed at his so quickly getting another. What beans was he going to spill this time? The Whips had reason to be worried, for they were aware that after his recent retaliation, it would be decidedly imprudent to have him stopped again. Why couldn't the cad play cricket!

No one knows what dark plan had motivated his early arrival but he certainly seems to have changed it after being called out to the lobby. There he was seen in consultation with a deputation of traders from the St. Pancras, Marylebone and Paddington Chambers of Commerce. They had come to ask him to make representations against an Order under which shops in the Central London area were to close at 4 o'clock in the pre-Christmas period. They had a good case, though there was also much to be said in favour of the Order, since it relieved rush-hour congestion in the Centre during the Christmas shopping. C-R appears to have agreed with the traders. In any case he made it his business to carry their protest to the proper quarter and with such alacrity that the deputation got the quickest service on record.

Asking them to "wait a bit" he went off to seek a Member who would be willing to forego an early Adjournment. He was lucky enough to find one who had the Adjournment for that same day and had just cancelled it. In a flash C-R bagged it. He also managed to get the Minister concerned to hurry down to the House (courtesy as well as the need of a reply demands that the Minister be warned of the matter being raised) and within an hour of seeing the deputation was on his feet stating the case for the Chambers of Commerce. "It was excellent work," said one of the deputation afterwards, "and as good a speech as could possibly have been made on our behalf."* High praise, and appropriate to the speed of the service.

C-R probably had two motives in seizing this opportunity, the first being to assist the people in the Central London area, who would be much inconvenienced if the shops closed before they arrived home from work, and the second to test whether the Whips had had enough. As they made no attempt to count him out or otherwise obstruct his speaking, it must be assumed they had. His rough retaliation had worked. He had a right to be satisfied. Never before had he upset the business of the House, and he had only resorted to it in these instances in self defence. He had taught the Whips that he also could play their game. Many Members intimated their approval of his success, and almost the whole House shared his satisfaction—to the extent at least that the Whips would go more carefully in the future and not oblige them to miss their Friday trains again.

* See appendix, page 288.

But the satisfaction was not universal. If the *Sunday Express* is any reliable guide, C-R was if possible even more out of favour in high quarters, for not long after this parliamentary show-down it gave great prominence to a list of M.P.s who "had not made the most of themselves." There was Lady Astor who had "listened too little and talked too much," Quintin Hogg who had "obscured his first-class brain by the antics of a principal boy," Russell Thomas who was "more Tory than the genuine article"—and C-R at the head of the list "for making himself the wrong kind of nuisance." He could hardly have expected to be named as any other kind of nuisance in a newspaper owned by a member of the Government he had so vexatiously defeated and annoyed.

The 'nuisance' followed up his success two weeks later by moving an Amendment which, if adopted, would have ensured that Members should be allowed a full half-hour's debate on the Adjournment before they could be counted out.* Recognising the justice of this suggestion, many Members supported him, but House-Leader Anthony Eden, replying for the Government, though mildly sympathetic, left little doubt that the Whips had passed word round to defeat the Amendment. They were not going to let their dangerous opponent get away with another battle honour. Besides, if the Amendment were carried it would deprive them of the means wherewith to muzzle C-R or anybody else in the event of them desiring to do so in the future. Remembering that discretion is sometimes the better part of valour, C-R must have concluded this was precisely the time when running away might enable him to fight another day. So rather than court certain defeat, which would have made it difficult to re-open the matter, he jumped up just before the division was due and withdrew the Amendment saying: "As we have had an opportunity of stating our case, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to withdraw, and in so doing I am motivated by the hope that, after what has been said, there will not be any countings out for purely vindictive reasons." The House cheered.

The incident from beginning to end was not without salutary effect. He had called attention to the injustice of gagging minorities, and if he had not yet succeeded in depriving the Whips of their inordinate power he had at least administered a rebuke which would make them chary in the use of it.

As he left the House that night the Member for Marylebone must have been highly pleased with the outcome of his recent parliamentary activities. But he had evidently not forgotten

* See Appendix, page 290.

the unfinished speech which had started the dramatic sequence of events. The subject—how to prevent the Germans plunging the world into another war—was one to which he had given considerable thought, as the records show. He may some day recognise that if the guilt of the Germans is great, there are a lot of non-Germans who are far from innocent. For the time being, however, he was intent on diminishing the chances of slaughter and sorrow again emerging from behind the Rhine, and while the wrangling had been going on in the House had been busy turning out a leaflet, complete with map, setting forth his views on the matter. Into the leaflet went what he had said and what he had not been allowed to say, and he sent it out to Peers and M.P.s, Foreign Embassies and Legations and to any and every place, including somewhat optimistically the newspapers, where he considered it desirable that the views of one M.P. should be known. This document may fitly mark a milestone in the political pilgrimage of the Member for Marylebone. Dated November 9, 1944, and headed "THE CONTINUATION OF THIS SPEECH WAS PROHIBITED IN PARLIAMENT," the document reads :

There is just one thing which the majority of the people of the world are agreed upon, and that is that Germany must never again be able to plunge the world into war. But just how we are to achieve that desirable objective is anybody's guess. There are plans and suggestions by the score for its attainment ; they range from mass sterilisation to mass education, but none of these can guarantee success. Some feel that there can be only one absolutely certain way of preventing Germany from making war on mankind again, and that is to annihilate every German. Although many people would readily agree to that drastic solution it cannot be advanced as a civilised or practical proposition. Yet there is a practically certain method whereby Germans can be made war-impotent, without calling upon the firing squads and without unduly disturbing the tender susceptibilities of the most fervid humanitarians.

In a sentence, it is the absorption of Germany by its neighbouring States. This is something entirely different from, and much more feasible than, the plan for carving up Germany into a lot of small German States. The defect of that carving up plan is that the geographical expression, Germany, is merely divided into a number of small components. So long as you have that situation you have the ever-present danger of "unification moves," with their potent appeal to Germanism.

Clearly then, splitting up Germany into separate German States is no solution. Neither is the idealistic suggestion that the German people can be re-educated by "foreigners." The

Germans recently found to their cost that they were unable to do that to the vanquished French though they tried their best. The only people who could re-educate the various German groups into a new way of life are those who live on the present perimeter of Germany, who already have much in common with their German neighbours, because of the economic, geographical, climatic and other factors which condition them all. Therefore it is suggested that those nations that lie on Germany's border should be allocated the adjacent German territory, which would give them the essential authority for the necessary "education." To show how all this is feasible I have had a special map prepared by experts, and I should be very pleased to give a copy to any hon. Member who would like to have one. The proposed frontiers, as shown on this map, have been arrived at after careful consideration, wherever possible, of such human factors as tastes, religion, temperament, culture, habits and such like—the same language has been a secondary consideration.

The mistake many are inclined to make is in believing that a common language is an affinity that binds people. What about the American Wars of Independence, or our relationship with Southern Ireland?

Germany, in spite of Goebbels' slogans and Hitler's rantings is not, and never has been, "one folk and one State," except in the pursuit of war. The antagonism of the Northern to the Southern Germans is classic. Early on, the various tribes of Germans were brought together by warlike activities, in the course of which one group—the Prussians—acquired supreme command. These Prussians—and not so long ago—in the face of all protests, transformed the geographical term, "Germany," into a political concept. This political unification was developed by Bismarck and carried to its peak of fanaticism by Hitler and his gang.

Under my plan the absorbed peoples, hitherto German, would not become Stateless. They would form part and parcel of the nation within whose borders their former land was now merged, and within a generation or two, as has been so often shown in history, what with deaths and inter-marriages, they would lose their identity as a separate people. Yet they would not be controlled, re-educated and absorbed by visitors with whom they had nothing in common, as would be the case if the British, Americans or Russians were to attempt to do any such thing. Quite the contrary. They would have found a better way of life, with people not, in many instances, fundamentally different from themselves but politically dedi-

cated to democratic principles and so able to guide them away from the false gods of dictatorships. The new grouping would be as far as possible biologically, economically and ethnographically compatible.

Look at the position to-day. It is well known that the food, architecture and costumes of the Bavarians are hardly distinguishable from those of their Austrian neighbours. The austere Protestant culture of North Germany is almost identical with that of the Danes, and the similarity of geographical surroundings gives them the same philosophies and foods. I think that the same tastes in food is important because we so often find that those who appreciate, for example, steak and onions, get on very well together, in the same way as do those who habitually enjoy goulash, or macaroni, or, for that matter hot-dogs. Coming from food to glass, let me point out as another example of what I am attempting to demonstrate, that the great glass industries of Central Europe and the people who work in them, are similar in Saxony and Bohemia. One could amplify these examples *ad libitum*.

Thus, starting from the belief that the continued existence of Germany, whole or sub-divided into German States, is undesirable, we see that there are very strong biological and ethnological reasons for absorbing the present Germany into her neighbouring States. There are few valid historical arguments against such a course. Economic considerations may give rise to some minor objections, but the most potent problem to be faced is that some of Germany's neighbours may be reluctant to have parts of the Reich *plus* their inhabitants thrust upon them. In 1918, nations were anxious to have the size of their countries increased, but to-day in some instances, I have no doubt that there are nations that would have to be persuaded to do this. But it would be their duty as their contribution to the maintenance of European security.

At this point, by means of "the count," this speech was stopped. It was Major Carver, the 61-year-old Tory M.P., who was willing to start this manœuvre by standing up and saying, "Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is not a quorum present." Having made this, his only contribution to debate since the war started, he ambled out of the House, en route for the Carlton Club.

The following is the remainder of the speech the public was in consequence not allowed to hear.

Nations around Germany have already endured and lost much by war, therefore to ensure against going through it all again, they should take on these tasks of educating within their borders citizens who used to be of German nationality.

Besides, there would always be the International Police Force to help them maintain order if necessary.

I am apprehensive, though, that the plan that will finally be put into effect is the post-war military occupation of Germany. A solution of doubtful efficacy if ever there was one, and concerning which Stalin had this to say : " It will be effective only if the Great Powers co-operate in the future." How right he is, for any of the countries who contribute to the suggested military occupation of Germany may, for all we know, at some future day, have a weak " forgive and forget " government, who will withdraw their country's forces after only a comparatively short occupation of Germany. It happened after the last war. What assurance is there that it will not happen again ? The answer from our leaders of today is that they can only hope for the best, for they cannot guarantee what future governments will do. That's not good enough when the opportunity to do better is staring us in the face. The plan to prevent future German aggression must be proof against whatever change of policy may be desired by weak governments of the future, either here or in the U.S.A.

To that end there is only one plan. Divide Germany up between the countries that surround her. If this were done and if, for example, a future British Government led by some idealistic " Kiss and be friends " Prime Minister were to ask Poland to restore territory that had been a part of Germany, there would fortunately be little hope of that request being granted. But if Germany had not been apportioned to other countries, but had been divided up into separate German States, how easy it would be for a weak British Government to allow " the poor Germans to be one family again." How much easier still would it be if there was no partition of Germany but mere military occupation, for that effete short-memoried British Government which might well come about to say, " Why should we, who stand for world brotherhood, continue to humiliate a proud nation ? " Then out comes our Army of Occupation.

Anyhow, no Army of Occupation will be able to keep an eye on what goes on in every beer-cellar and underground factory. What is more, the longer the Allied Occupation the greater the revenge that will be bottled up and planned, and by allowing Germany to continue as a nation, a vast centre will be available where Germans will be left free to get together and organise hatred and future wars. How much greater will be that determination for revenge when Germany, having had the humiliation of losing the second world war in

thirty years, finds herself not only minus colonies but also with chunks torn off her. That, whether you like it or not, is exactly what is bound to occur, and that is exactly what those dangerous idealists in our midst will not face up to.

Facts, though, must be faced. Aggressor countries cannot expect to annex territory if they win and their own territory to remain inviolate if they lose. The following "chunks" are anyhow going to be removed from Germany. It is expected that Denmark will have at least Schleswig-Holstein returned to her. Before being annexed by the Germans it belonged to the Danes, and for their brave part whilst under the yoke of German occupation they certainly deserve to get back their own territory. That is "chunk" No. 1! The Russians have made it clear that they intend to have back their old frontiers, and that Poland can be compensated by acquiring East Prussia, and by moving west into Germany, at any rate up to the river Oder, which is not far from Berlin. "Chunk" No. 2! The leaders of the United Nations have already decreed that Austria, which was a part of the Reich, shall be a country on her own. "Chunk" No. 3! Our Prime Minister has indicated that the future frontiers of France must be the Rhine. That being so, the same must apply to Belgium. "Chunks" Nos. 4 and 5! Very recently Holland has demanded that she shall be compensated with German territory for the really terrible ruination of her country—devastation of such a character that it is irreparable for many, many years to come. In consequence, it has been officially stated in Parliament that we will give "energetic support" to such claims. "Chunk" No. 6! No doubt before very long other justifiable claims to German territory will arise—the only sound economic form of reparation for Hun devastation.

This all boils down to the cold physical fact that Germany is bound to be dismembered, when a festering trunk will remain—a centre from which the bitterest form of resentment can be fostered, and the most diabolical secret weapons can be planned and eventually manufactured—weapons which will require no Air Force, Army or Navy to carry them on their deadly missions.

We who call ourselves realists say, why risk that when it is in our power to prevent it. We claim that only by doing away with the Reich as a nation, can we prevent her from inflicting terrible sufferings upon our children and the world in general, and further, that it is humane to put out of agony a body so mutilated as I have shown Germany is bound to be.

Such a plan would also diminish the possibility of Russia eventually controlling Germany and the juggernaut that conjures up.

There are, though, influential people here and in America who are obsessed with the idea of giving the Germans a square deal after the war. Roughly, these can be divided into two groups. There are those who invariably consider every other country before their own and, parrot-like, repeat *ad nauseam*, clichés about "international brotherhood" and our duty to educate our enemies into the ways of righteousness by our own good example—in fact, all the old sloppy mouthings that we heard after the last time Huns had plunged millions in blood.

The other group is recruited from big business—certain unprincipled financiers who are anxious that Germany shall remain as intact as possible, solely in order that they can continue trading with her and assist her with private loans at large interest rates. They explain that this is necessary to assist employment. But such patriotic camouflage won't wash, because private loans of money to foreigners were never to the advantage of the unemployed at home, and ordinary trade with our late enemies will continue, even though the German business houses concerned find themselves no longer under the German flag.

The group of Allied financial Shylocks is powerful, whilst the group of ingrained appeasers is articulate, and between them they will be the answer to the war-mongering German's prayer, unless honest sane people come out of their "leave it to others" lethargy and assert themselves.

For posterity's sake only I sometimes wish that a part of Britain and America had been occupied by the Nazis. Vast numbers of the English-speaking races have hardly felt this war—or the last war for that matter. They have not even been hungry. Of course, their outlook is different from that of the millions who have been bereaved or mutilated by war; or those whose country has been overrun by cruel, ruthless, bestial invaders, and who have experienced refinements of torture in concentration camps and have had to watch atrocities committed on their wives and husbands, children and old folk.

It may be the irony of fate that through the influence of those who have not suffered millions are doomed to suffer more.

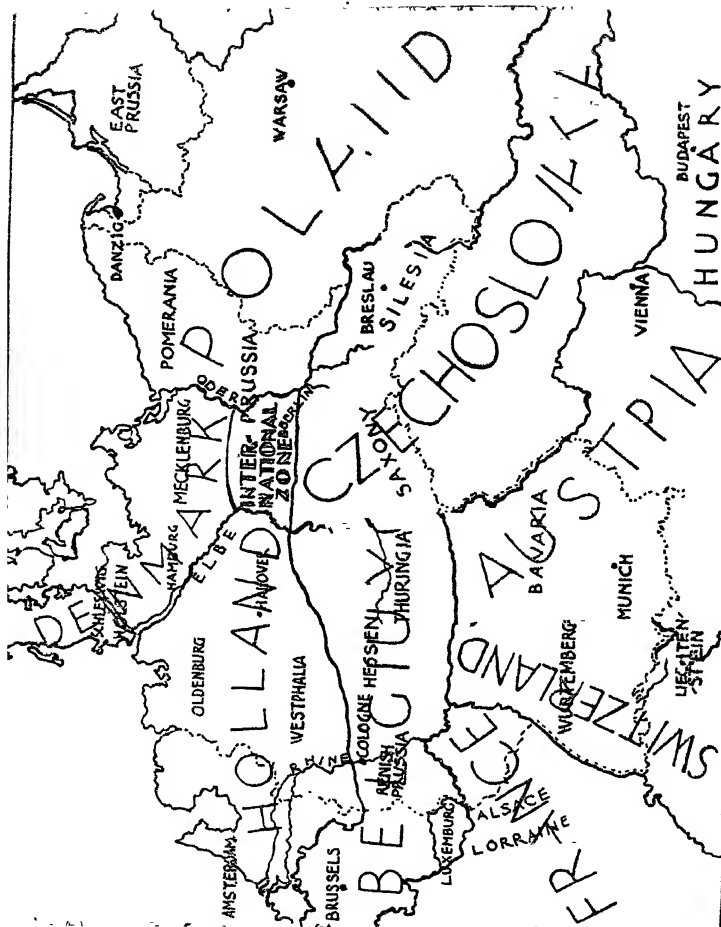
Whatever may be thought about the solution offered in his analysis, no other M.P. had attempted to reduce to realistic terms the vague talk then current in country and Parliament about the world's worst headache to come. "I think most unbiased M.P.s," said the political correspondent of the *Evening Star*, "would agree that it is a very good statement on a highly topical subject. Captain Cunningham-Reid favours a drastic partition of Germany, and I imagine that in this he is voicing the opinion of a mighty force of the electorate. Is not this the sort of talk one hears in clubs and pubs and in the ordinary homes throughout the country? It will seem extraordinary to most people that the 'count' should have been used to stop such a speech in the Mother of Parliaments."

But stopped it was, and when it appeared in leaflet form few newspapers thought it worthy of notice.

On the next page is an outline of the map included in the leaflet.

Besides the ethnographical and political advantages of this partition of Germany, there is also the advantage to be gained by Central European countries becoming larger and of a more equal size. This will add greater stability to the balance of power, which would in itself be a factor for peace.

The International Zone is roughly 75 miles square. Here would be situated the headquarters of the International Police Force, the International Labour Office which was formerly at Geneva, and the International High Court, etc. The central position of Berlin, which has always been looked upon more as a cosmopolis than a metropolis, makes it eminently suitable for such purposes.



----- Future boundaries.
..... old German boundaries.

REPORTING PROGRESS

THAT any M.P. of unconventional habit and independent character should be persecuted for pursuing the line he thinks right is a sad reflection on the mediocrity of the mass of politicians. Yet spite and intolerance seem an inescapable result of the extant parliamentary set-up wherein the welfare of the community is all too frequently subordinated to the interests of the party bureaucrats. It is perhaps C-R's most important achievement that he has helped to rivet public attention on this unsatisfactory state of affairs. There is nothing more easily demonstrable in current politics than that the majority of M.P.s no longer represent the people. They are selected and ruled by the party managers. It is C-R's contention that they are Members of Parties rather than Members of Parliament and that they represent their party's interests in the constituencies rather than the constituents' interests in the House of Commons. They owe their seats and therefore their allegiance to one or another of the dominant party cliques, and so cannot be highly responsive to the needs or wishes of their electors.

There is much to be said for this argument, and it is the disparity between the supposed freedom and actual servitude of M.P.s that accounts for most of them saying one thing on the public platform and doing quite contradictory things in Parliament. As more than one Member has been known to remark, their bread and butter often depend on their obeying the orders of the party caucus. Promotion is the more likely to be achieved by a consistent display of due servility. That is why the few M.P.s who show signs of rebellion are called to repentance on the party mat. That also is why there was such a dearth of able men in Parliament when Winston Churchill was called upon to rescue the country from the peril into which the party hacks had plunged it.

It may be remembered further that Churchill came to power not by the wish of any party group, but by the will of the commonalty, a will which under extant circumstances can make little headway except in conditions of extreme crisis. In normal times caucus rule is absolute. That is why Churchill was so long kept out. For practical purposes he was an Independent, and when his great day arrived and he looked around for help in his onerous task he called on aides like Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Beaverbrook, Ernest Bevin and others, men who though

not without political allegiances made no submission to the party bureaucrats. It is men of this calibre that C-R believes the country will need to surmount the problems of the peace. There is every chance, however, that in the reversion to something near normalcy the caucuses will sooner or later recover absolute control. The signs are already significant, for Churchill is now a prisoner of his own caucus.

Be that as it may, there is force in the contention which urges the return of a greater number of untrammelled M.P.s. Like all human institutions, political parties tend to become moribund when once they have grown to maturity and reached a high degree of organised consolidation. At that stage control passes inevitably into the hands of a bureaucracy, which with equal inevitability conveniently identifies the national interest with its own and therefore countenances no aim or action other than those which protect or advance its own vested interests. The parties thus become seminaries of the second rate and Parliament the citadel of eternal negation. The people are frustrated, their interest lags and the various bureaucrats sit cynically supreme, untroubled by the contempt expressed in the universal cry "a plague on both your houses."

It is with the commendable aim of redeeming the promise that Parliament once held out for the people that C-R and a very few others demand a limit to the powers of the caucuses. In his view there can be no radical progress, whatever the declared programmes of the competing parties, until the practices of Parliament are brought into line with the needs of constituency representation. He and those who hold similar views may be right or wrong, but that democracy is ill served when parliamentary decisions are the result not of public debate but of hole-and-corner caucus agreements brooks no denial. Sectional decisions made by the bureaucrats where the Press is excluded take little account of the opinions of the party rank and file and much less of that of the electors. House of Commons divisions reveal little of what the individual M.P.s think or want, because the vote is almost always decided beforehand, behind the scenes.

Only of an Independent Member can constituents say with confidence that he, personally and on his private responsibility, voted for this or that. The votes of the party hacks are determined for them, and no one knows whether the Member voted from conviction or under coercion, or simply because he lacked the knowledge or character to make up his mind for himself. The result is that parliamentary debates and divisions are largely a farce. The advantage gained by the long fight which established the right to report the proceedings of Parliament is therefore negated, and as far as knowing what really goes on there the

public is back in the same place as it was more than a century ago. Is it then any wonder that the more the party composition of the Commons changes the less the condition of the country alters?

In so far as the Member for Marylebone—he has been called the Martyr of Marylebone—has made this issue of Parliamentary Reform a central theme of his agitation he has undoubtedly performed a useful and timely service to the electorate. For the problem of bringing Parliament up to date to reflect the play of opinion in a wider and, it is to be hoped, a wiser electorate is of national import. Both in speech and pamphlet C-R has propounded the need and provided the theoretical justification for the change. Not that he thinks the Commons would suddenly become a Valhalla of supreme wisdom, much less of virtue, if it were packed with Independents. What he does think and has argued with much force is that the crippling effects of party intrigue and vested interest, and the servility of caucus-dominated M.P.s, would be to a large extent countered if there were returned a considerable number of Independent Members. They might not be sufficient to form a government (although it should not be forgotten that the Churchill Government included many Independents), but it would go a long way if there were sufficient of them to bring the big issues into the light of day instead of their being concealed in the party sanctums or smothered in the poisonous fog of bureaucratic bargaining. A sizeable group of Independents in the Commons could well provide a balance of inestimable value to the proper functioning of democracy.

From the elector's point of view much depends on what is meant by Independence. C-R has long made his position clear. "I stand," he has said, "for freedom to make up my own mind and to speak and vote according to the promptings of my conscience and to the merits of each particular case. As an Independent I stand or fall on my own actions and cannot argue when it happens to suit, as is so often the defence of the party hack, that I supported what the party heads decreed although I did not like it very much." He would be an unreasonable elector who objected to that.

As for his general policy, C-R proclaims it to be progressive, and invites examination of his record. There is no dubiety about that either. Would that every parliamentary aspirant were so precise or that every M.P. had been so specific. "Standing above the schemings of the caucuses and beyond the lash of the party whips," he told his constituents early in 1945, "I am able to act in the national interest as I conceive it. The trouble is that the party men—and I was once one of them, though never a yes-man—put party first, second, and all the time. We

have got to understand that that old kind of narrow thinking will not do. Things have to be judged and actions taken in accordance with what is necessary for the common good. The nation as a whole cannot prosper or be content if any sections of the community are neglected and left to their ills and anxieties. That way lies only discontent and disruption and a repetition of the disorder which intensified the depressions that followed the last war. Despite the burdens that will remain with us after we have won the present conflict, we shall still be competent enough a nation to see that no one goes in want and that all enjoy a decent standard of life—that is if we are sensible enough to make it so."

Turning from ends to means, he declared that just as the resources of the country had been organised for war so they could be organised for peace and no narrow sectional interests should be allowed to stand in the way. "But there should be no nationalisation just for its own sake or to suit the book of some particular party. We have to have a care that we do not smother private enterprise, only to instal a number of unnecessary and perhaps inefficient bureaucrats ; but basic services such as transport, fuel, lighting and water should come under some form of State jurisdiction if they continue to overcharge the public and to give bad service.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that we might learn something from the rest of the world just as they have often learned from us. Industrial concentrations under State control are operating successfully in some countries, including some of the British Dominions, as well as Russia, and there is the American experiment in the Tennessee Valley Authority. We must be ready to experiment too, but soberly. Experiment is the essence of enterprise, public or private. If in a particular basic industry past methods fail, we should essay combining the drive and flexibility of private enterprise with the scope and resources of public enterprise and thus try the advantages of both. There should be no wholesale nationalisation or amalgamation. That was a mistake the Russians made ; and Stalin has had the good sense to reduce the size of many State enterprises and also to encourage initiative by varying the rewards of effort and fastening responsibility on the individual. For us it would be more than unwise to scrap a system just because it has imperfections and substitute something of an extreme nature that we have never tried and that might be a complete failure."

The analysis is worthy of consideration. In making it C-R, who must in some respects regard himself—to use Churchill's phrase—as a lifelong Conservative, was serving no 'ism' and certainly seeking no office, for it was in thinking for himself and

expressing such views that he had become suspect in the Tory Party. He was assessing the industrial problem on its own merits and his own responsibility. In view of his record it would be strange if he did not stress initiative and enterprise. He has no time for the stereotyped in politics or industry. Nor is he, in the above passage, rushing to conclusions. He wants to examine, investigate, experiment with caution. When he is sure of his ground he will, if past practice is any guide, stand solidly on his knowledge just as he did in the matter of Service claims and the many other issues he has mooted or espoused in Parliament. And at that time he can be expected to declare and pursue his convictions. That is if he is still in Parliament.

In an effort to encompass his defeat at the next election the Conservative caucus seem to be making supreme exertions. Early in 1945 they were pushing their campaign against him in a particularly damaging and subtle way. Steering clear of his notable record of public service, they were once again concentrating on the attack personal, with the important difference that whereas formerly they relied on vague innuendoes they were now adding a downright inaccurate and misleading accusation. Bomb-shattered Marylebonians were being asked "whether they were going to vote for a man who ran away from the blitz and hid in America for years?"

A lie so sedulously built up and broadcasted as this one has been is difficult to overtake. It is a positive accusation that has been designedly reared on a false impression. Even Ministers, like Brendan Bracken, have lent that baseless tale the appearance of authenticity and given it wide publicity. It is difficult to track such distortions to every doorstep. C-R and his supporters may explain at every opportunity that he left London before the Luftwaffe arrived and returned in time for their worst raids, that he was only in America for a few weeks and that he went with the authority of a Government Department to arrange the evacuation of children—and who in such circumstances would not have gone?—but it is doubtful whether these truths will travel as far or as swiftly as the fiction. A lie has usually more spicy news value than a denial, and those few who eventually learn the truth may already have been irreparably prejudiced. If in spite of the pernicious mendacity of the caucus he does manage to hold this Tory citadel it will be something near a miracle. If he loses it will be a distinct encouragement to caucus rule and its accompanying evils. It would also be an ironic comment on electoral intelligence should he happen to get downed for a while by caucus manipulation of the wrongs he has struggled so hard to right.

Now that C-R's colourful and chequered career has been chronicled up to date, it will have been observed that it falls

into two distinct and utterly different parts. For many years he appeared to succeed at everything he attempted and secured almost all that most men covet. It was said in those early days that he went through life like a hot knife through butter. He obtained about all he could wish for, more perhaps than was good for him.

But a superfluity of fortune sometimes proves embarrassing. In C-R's case the magnitude of his intangible and material possessions proved his temporary undoing—if that is the appropriate phrase. But it's an ill-wind that blows no good, and if he did not rejoice as his enemies did at the turn of the tide, he has never been known to express any regrets at its turning. He has himself chiefly to blame for deserting the tranquil waters of favour and plunging in against the social stream, but he is not reputed to have sought any solace in the haven of self-pity. When he courted the hostility of the high-ups by barging into the Peerage Division and accepted the odium of high society by breaking with his rich wife and her royal relations, he must have known his future would be stormy. He might, as the storm gathered force, have weakened and retracted, and had he done so he could have excused himself politically by reference to the many reversions among rebels in his own and other camps. But he refused to repent or repine. Most of his one-time friends quickly abandoned the ship they believed to be sinking. The Marylebone clique sprang to life again with a jerk and joyously gathered fresh hope. But the central figure of the commotion behaved in the most annoying way, refusing to be silenced or sunk.

On the contrary, and much to the chagrin of his traducers, he had the effrontery to fight back. Insensitive to the whispering in the social sphere, he battled vigorously against the political critics in Commons and constituency, and with such verve and persistence that the diehards, time and again defeated, might be forgiven the excess of animus that has at times arisen from their excessive rage. They might have softened a little had the cause of it revealed occasionally a spot of weakness or exposed a vulnerable chink. But throughout the second phase of his career he has shown himself as uncompromising as in the first he was accommodating. If his determination has been fed on his opponents' petty manoeuvres and monstrous abuse it must be said for them that they were exasperated by his indifferent and sometimes arrogant manner. Peeved, they have complained that he is so completely nerveless as to appear scarcely human. Whether that has been an exhibition of protective armour on C-R's part none is ever likely to know.

Summing up the divergent stages of the man's career it is

impossible not to observe the enervating influence of an excess of inherited wealth. He started well, with a good war record, a few years' hard work, and early entry into Parliament. There also the record was good—allowing always for the asinine content of Tory policy—and many a time he showed a progressive inclination that was hard to reconcile with the general trend of Baldwinian reaction. Subsequently, when married to money and influence, he was no longer under the necessity of relying for advancement on hard work. He was on the easy road up. The set-back that ensued on the series of clashes in mid-career and sent him again to the bottom of the hill, was probably the best thing that could have happened from the point of view of his public life. It improved his sense of reality and called forth exertions toned to a new scale of values. That he is on the way up again, and by the hard road, suggests that he may yet arrive at high position, and find it the more satisfying because attained on his own merits. In any case, he has the consolation of knowing that the later phase of his parliamentary career has been fraught with far greater significance than the years devoured by the social locusts.

Reduced to desperation by his successes, G-R's detractors have concentrated their criticism on his personal character. Over and above the Honolulu tale the substance of the whispering campaign when boiled down to anything specific amounts to no more than a petulant squeal that he has got on too well with the ladies. Considering the source from which they come, these prurient squeakings are the sheerest humbug. Many of the protestants are just plain envious. How many of them are in a position to throw stones and how many of them if tempted by an attractive opportunity would not fall? The private lives of many exalted politicians would be hard put to pass the scrutiny of Mrs. Grundy. Politicians above all people have to be judged by their value to the community and not by the trivia which is no concern of the community. The world is a drab place enough, but it would be no place at all if everybody conformed to the ethics of Carthusian monks.

In the political sphere, G-R may at times have stuck out his chin a bit too far. But it is his own chin and he alone knows what inspired the far and frequent protrusions. His courage has brought results that could never have been gained without someone taking risks. Since the war awakened him to a sense of responsibility he has many achievements to his credit and even his critics are compelled to admit, however grudgingly, the part he has played in reserving to Parliament what rights it still retains against official encroachments. By his exertions he

has kept many Departments on the alert and by his example has encouraged other Members to a like vigilance.

Few M.P.s have found their forecasts justified by events as often as C-R. Early he warned officialdom against the danger of playing a double game at Geneva, and time and again stressed the vital importance of air power, prophesying long in advance of the event how battleships would become vulnerable to air attack when operating in narrow waters. When the war had arrived to confirm his prognostications he emphasized the mistake of leaving in office so many of the people responsible for it, warned that they might lose it, which they almost did, and predicted that they would certainly protract it, which is exactly what the old gang have managed to do. His daring in voicing these warnings contributed to his being expelled from the Conservative Party.

Again, in February, 1942, urging better Service pay and conditions, he cautioned the Government on the resentment its parsimony was creating among the men and women in the Forces. For that he was blackguarded in Parliament and accused of treason, but was again proved right when the Government was forced to bow to the storm which he had started. In April, 1943—and previously—he urged the need of better understanding with America and trounced the Ministry of Propaganda for permitting the U.S.A. to remain virtually a free field for the sowing of false ideas about the aims and efforts of Britain. For setting fact against official phantasy, he was again showered with abuse, Brendan Bracken dubbing his speech "slime." And here once more events proved him right, for a few months afterwards Bracken put into effect precisely what C-R had advocated. It was he who, time and again championing the right of Service folk publicly to express their political views when on leave, claimed that sooner or later the authorities would have to give in—which they ultimately did. Other instances of insight and foresight, like the proposal for postal voting, now adopted for certain classes of electors, are scattered plentifully through his career.

Since it is now fashionable for M.P.s to claim electoral favour in the measure they supported Winston Churchill, C-R's conduct in this connection is worth noting. And the first thing to note is that he was advocating what Churchill advocated when the future war leader was still exiled in the Conservative-ordained wilderness. Constantly, in print as well as in Parliament, he gave Churchill staunch support—and without, as far as is known, ever reaching out for a lift on the Churchill bandwaggon. "I shall continue," said C-R in April, 1945, "if re-elected, and Churchill is premier, to support him 100 per cent. in his magni-

ficent prosecution of the war. But home affairs are a different matter. There I reserve for myself the right to act independently of anybody and only to be guided by what is in the best interests of my constituents."

He has not hesitated to attack Churchill's henchmen when he thought it necessary, advancing criticisms which were subsequently justified by events. His frequent castigations of the placemen in the War Administration were often merited and salutary. In this role of watch-dog C-R was not alone, but as one who had divested himself of party shackles he was in a position to give a lead and did so on many occasions without regard to his own popularity or advancement. There were only a few men in the War Parliament alive or courageous enough to do that. In making his attacks, moreover, he sought no hole and corner seclusion, but declared himself always in open debate in the Commons where others had the opportunity of hitting back, which some of them did in ferocious style—above and below the belt.

Being an Independent he is able to speak and vote as moved by the merits of the issues raised. Often he has ventured on to ground which other M.P.s have avoided like the plague. His attitude on the mis-uses of whipocracy and the privileged treatment accorded Prince Paul and other notorious quislings has not enhanced his popularity in high quarters. Of greater interest to the average elector—so far as they have been permitted to know anything about it—has been his fight for improved pay, pensions and conditions for Service folk and proper treatment when they come out. Of like general interest has been his advocacy of real equality of war sacrifice, his demand for decent old age pensions, his clamour over housing, and his concern for humble individuals like the lone septuagenarian servant summarily sacked from the Ritz Hotel after 36 years' service, and the young girl of 15 abandoned to the scant mercies of a doubtfully conducted hostel. Of even wider import have been his challenging declarations on Anglo-American relations and on the future structure and status of Germany.

On all these matters, vital or otherwise, C-R has spoken up good and proper. His reward in the Commons has often been jeers and obstruction, while the reaction of the Marylebone caucus has been a compost of rootless calumny and splenetic tittle-tattle. With a few outstanding exceptions the newspapers have either ignored or distorted his speeches while giving great prominence to the tirades of his traducers. They have reviewed his books only to misrepresent them and marked his parliamentary assiduousness only to write it down as of the wrong kind. Surrounded by such a plethoric abundance of false witness

and ill-will lesser men would have quailed and given up. Not so the Member for Marylebone. Few can doubt that he has had plenty to induce him to weariness and disillusion, but despite it all he sticks to his chosen course—heaven knows why. And in face of every rebuke and rebuff he remains gay and resilient. Can it be that he is spurred on by a belief—to which he is certainly entitled—that his crusades have done a deal of good and may yet do more?



EPILOGUE

THIS book was in the hands of the printers when to most people's surprise Premier Churchill, having disbanded his wartime Coalition and appointed a "Caretaker" Government composed almost entirely of Conservatives, plunged the country into a snap general election right on the heels of the German collapse. The "Caretakers" went down like ninepins, no fewer than 32 Ministers losing their seats, while Churchill himself had the mortifying experience of seeing more than a quarter of the votes in his own constituency cast for a practically unknown opponent. But the Marylebone result put Wakefield, the Churchill candidate, first, with a majority of 5,151, Dr. Elizabeth Jacobs (Labour) second, C-R (Independent) third, and Thomas Lodge (Liberal) fourth.

C-R put up a remarkably good fight in spite of the fact that unlike the previous election he had no great party machine to assist him. But it was not the lack of that which defeated him.

The majority of the electors either voted Labour or they voted to show their appreciation of one man—Churchill. It would not in St. Marylebone have made the slightest difference to the Tories who the candidate was or what, if any, was his policy so long as he was endorsed by the one and only Winnie.

From that point of view, the election was peculiarly unreal. Marylebone had the appearance of an immense benefit or advertising campaign for Churchill. His name was plastered everywhere and his picture, medium-size to 12 feet high, looked down expectantly from numerous hoardings. To most of the posters had been tagged the name of Wakefield. An immense loud-speaker van, festooned with Churchill's name and photographs, together with a smaller outfit, perpetually toured the constituency loudly exhorting the electors to show their confidence in Churchill.

Finally it was proclaimed the great man himself would make a personal appearance and a few days before the poll thousands gathered before the Town Hall. The crowds were being regaled with speeches and music that exuded from Wakefield's loud-speaker pantechinon. As time dragged on his speakers could think of nothing more to say and the crowd started to get impatient at the non-appearance of the Prime Minister. It was

then announced that Churchill's arrival would be delayed for half an hour.

Soon afterwards the police were observed making a passage through the crowds for a small car, and through the sunshine roof appeared the head and shoulders of C-R complete with hand microphone. Stopping in front of the Town Hall he boomed forth : " Now ladies and gentlemen, let's have some real politics for a change " . . . At this, Wakefield's loud-speaker started up in deafening volume " Roll Out the Barrel," and completely drowned C-R's less powerful apparatus. The crowd very decidedly resented this unsportsmanlike attack, and a number surged menacingly towards Wakefield's van, with the result that abruptly the barrel stopped rolling out.

C-R then proceeded to reap the fruits of his initiative and nerve. Having taken advantage of Wakefield's, that is to say Churchill's, immense audience he harangued them forcefully for over half an hour. The crowd cheered vociferously. He did not conclude until the P.M. was heralded. As Churchill approached, C-R greeted him at the top-pitch of his amplifier : " Marylebone Independents welcome you ! "

The crowd got a laugh when Churchill, in his speech, failed to remember the name of the candidate he was supposed to be recommending, and finally referred to him as " Mr. William Wake." There was surprisingly little cheering at the close of his speech until C-R trumpeted forth : " Now then, three proper cheers for Winnie ! " At this a mighty roar went up.

Previous to C-R's arrival on the scene a telegram was read out from Churchill stating that he wanted Wakefield and not C-R returned to the House of Commons. C-R was quick to point out that a telegram identically worded (except for the candidate's name) had been sent out by Conservative Central Office to all other Conservative candidates who were being opposed by Independents. Churchill himself, while speaking in Marylebone made no reference to the contents of this telegram and it would indeed have ill-become him had he done so, for he, above all, had been the champion of robust independence. His real views about political independence were emphasised in the following leaflet issued by C-R the day after Churchill's visit to Marylebone.

CHURCHILL'S ADVICE.

' What is the use of sending Members to the House of Commons who say just the popular things of the moment and merely endeavour to give satisfaction to the Government Whips by cheering loudly every Ministerial platitude, and by walking

through the Lobbies oblivious to the criticisms they hear. People talk about our parliamentary institutions and parliamentary democracy, but if these are to survive it will not be because the constituencies return tame, docile, subservient Members, and try to stamp out every form of independent judgment.'

—Winston Churchill, March 14th, 1939.

SO

VOTE FOR
CUNNINGHAM-REID,
Marylebone's Independent Candidate

In normal conditions this widely circulated and apt rejoinder might have made a big difference, but under the existing circumstances it had not the slightest effect on the voting of Marylebone Tories. Though C-R was a 100 per cent. supporter of Churchill in his war effort he was not the official Churchill nominee and his canvassers reported that time and time again they came up against the peculiar political anomaly of hearing electors say in so many words: "We must show our appreciation of Churchill, otherwise we would, of course, vote for the Captain."

But even had there been no Churchill influence it is unlikely that C-R would have won. More likely he would have been second with Labour the winner as a result of a more evenly split Anti-Socialist vote. The decisive factors of his defeat are to be found in nearly every chapter of this book—the long and persistent discrediting, ignoring or misrepresenting of practically everything he had done. So complete and thorough has been this vendetta that the public as a whole are heavily prejudiced against him. Offsetting the hazy admiration of his fighting qualities is the vague impression that he is always barking up the wrong tree—"a wrong kind of nuisance" as the political correspondent of the *Sunday Express* once put it.

Right through the election his canvassers met with caucus-inspired interrogations: "Why hasn't he fought for those in the Services?" "He ran away from the blitz to America for several years, didn't he?", and "What has he done for his constituents?"

In vain did his organisation publicise his parliamentary record showing that few M.P.s had done more for those in the Services. Extracts from hundreds of grateful Service—and civilian—letters were equally unavailing. Hopeless the effort to efface the scar of the American slander. Often where the explanations

were accepted the prejudice remained. It is one thing to kill a canard, quite another to change the disposition created in the minds of those who once believed it. Truth is heavily handicapped in a race to overtake abuse. So the long campaign of calumny and misrepresentation at last bore fruit. His enemies tactics had succeeded—for the time being.

The Marylebone contest was indeed a strange one for by all ordinary standards it would have appeared that C-R was well in the lead.

As a political campaigner he towered above all his opponents. For weeks before polling day he worked like a Trojan. His energy appeared inexhaustible. He must have averaged four or five hours public speaking a day, mostly out of doors. His style of speaking and his manner of answering questions were convincing and at times brilliant. But few electors attend political meetings—fewer still read election literature—so with no Press and no great political machine to help him a large proportion of Marylebone's 48,000 electors remained in ignorance of the real parliamentary service he had rendered during previous years.

Yet, in spite of all the prejudice that had been worked up against him, C-R throughout the election appeared to be extremely popular, as was his talented young wife. He employed novel electioneering methods. At all his indoor meetings only the two C-R's occupied the platform. No local or national "big-wigs" embellished the stage. Addressing his audience as if he were having a conversation with each one individually, C-R established an at-your-ease atmosphere. Skilfully and tactfully he handled interruptions, but when occasion called he froze the persistent heckler into silence. As a candidate therefore he was well armed. Typical of his technique was that adopted at his eve-of-the-poll mass meeting in Marylebone's Seymour Hall. After a half hour's straight-from-the-shoulder politics he paused to say: "And now, before I get on to the really controversial side of my remarks, and before we all in consequence start to get hot under the collar, I shall introduce a pleasant interlude by calling upon my wife." The warm applause which greeted her showed that the audience was neither deaf nor blind to a young woman who was both eloquent and attractive. C-R got a big laugh when he resumed, by saying, "All right, but you needn't rub it in. You have made it quite clear that you think she should be the candidate and not me."

He went on to make certain forecasts, which in the light of subsequent events are worth noting. "In a speech in the

House of Commons," said C-R, "I predicted that unless the Tories mended their ways disaster would overtake them. With less assurance I now predict that at the election after the present one they will be brought back into power by the mistakes of the Socialists. What, though, I can predict with confidence is that the Tory Party is doomed to eventual disintegration if they continue to conduct their party in so undemocratic a fashion—a party which sees to it that their parliamentary representatives are largely composed of privileged well-to-do inefficient, alias Yes-men, cannot hope to survive."

In view of the landslide the prognosis as to Tory disaster may be added to his collection of confirmed prophesies. The prediction about the probable result of Socialist mistakes smacks of wish-thinking—but who knows? At this final meeting C-R received a tremendous ovation. He had been equally well received at open air meetings. But putting a cross against his name in the polling booth was a different matter. Here the Churchill coupon and the legacy of misrepresentation were the deciding factors.

At the declaration of the poll the Labour and Liberal candidates bore testimony to the fair and sporting manner in which C-R had conducted the campaign. He reciprocated their sentiments, thanked his supporters and declared that, health permitting, he would return to the fight next time and win. It was noticeable that those present gave the greatest cheer for the defeated ex-Member. Thus ended C-R's third battle of Marylebone, the sixth contest in his Parliamentary career. Coupon and calumny played into the hands of his enemies. What they had failed to do before, they had now achieved by clambering on to the Churchill band-wagon.

This was indeed a triumph for the caucus. The "old gang" who had tried so long and so venomously to subdue the rebel had at last "got their man." The story of the vendetta, as related in these pages, provides a murky chapter in the history of British politics.

It reveals that the path of political independence is bestrewn with most formidable obstacles; that in the political jungle it is the "Yes-man" who has the easy way.

Whether under a Labour Government political independence will have a better chance and a fairer deal remains to be seen. It is not inconceivable that party orthodoxy may become more rigid, and that the voice of the man who objects to the eternal "Yes-ism" will be stifled in the process. But unless democracy is a meaningless term the spirit of independence in political

thought and action must be maintained. Those who place a priority value on these things will need to be on guard against the growing powers of whipocracy. Eternal vigilance truly is the price of freedom.

The nation has need of standard bearers. In the past the best have not been daunted by temporary reverses, but have looked upon every ending as a new beginning.

Thus then, another milestone has been reached on the lonely road trodden by the unpredictable subject of this narrative.

[END]

APPENDIX

A DANGEROUS DOCTRINE.

By CAPT. A. S. CUNNINGHAM-REID, D.F.C., M.P.

Daily Mirror, February 12th, 1934.

Parliamentary government is not only on its trial in France—it has had a good many verdicts returned against it already in various parts of the world during recent years. Lest a worse thing befall, we in England should therefore consider some of the weaknesses of the system which has suited our own national genius for so long, but which is now showing signs, even in this country, of cracking under the strain of the crisis years.

Not the least of these weaknesses bears the high-sounding name of Collective Cabinet Responsibility. This doctrine sets forth that the Cabinet is one and indivisible and that the Government will resign if any one of its measures introduced by any Minister suffers defeat in the House of Commons.

It is vaguely accepted by the public at large as a manifestation of that team spirit which Britons admire. It is very, very useful to Ministers who laud it as a pillar of the Constitution.

Actually this pillar is only canvas painted to look like stone, and has nothing whatever to do with the Constitution. It was invented by that supreme political cynic, Walpole, and reaffirmed by another cynic, Lord Melbourne, in the famous phrase, "Come, gentlemen, we must hang together or we shall hang separately."

In theory no doubt the doctrine is admirable. The Cabinet represents the collective wisdom of the Party, or parties of a coalition, and enjoys undivided confidence. Let the words of the Cabinet therefore be law upon all subjects, for without party discipline Members would become a disorganised rabble.

In practice it has come to mean that those Ministers who prove themselves duds have to be supported by the full weight of their colleagues' authority, pushed even to the threat of resignation. Measures, too, that no one particularly wants, but which embody the pet theories of So-and-So in the Cabinet, have to be pushed through a reluctant House of Commons by the same means.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.

It is urged in favour of Collective Cabinet Responsibility that acknowledged leaders should be followed blindly and that if things go amiss the remedy lies, not in a change of system, but in a change of leaders.

This is sound enough in the main, but it does not get over the point that a Member elected to combat Socialism should not find himself regarded as a traitor for voting against the die-hard Protection of Winkles Bill just because it is a Government measure.

It is also urged that the private Member, if allowed greater freedom of conscience in his vote, would tend to become irresponsible. I doubt it, for in fact his responsibility would become a more direct one. He would become responsible personally to his constituents.

Above all, it is urged that nothing would so weaken the authority of the Government as a series of defeats in the House of Commons on minor matters.

This is questionable. Those who heard the debates on the London Passenger Transport Bill saw the late Minister of Transport sitting mum and miserable while the Attorney-General endeavoured to soothe the House. Most considered this exhibition of team spirit more damaging than any defeat.

POWER OF THE WHIPS.

There is no doubt that all Governments, dressed in a little brief authority, tend to demonstrate their power first and foremost to their own followers.

This is due to that remarkable provision of our Constitution which gives the Prime Minister a right such as is conferred upon no Court of Law. By asking the King for a dissolution he may at any time fine disobedient followers £1,000 each for election expenses, with or without the loss of their seats.

A lot is heard of the crack of the Party whip, but there is weight behind the lash; so, when the Whips stand at the lobby doors, the private Member votes reluctantly for the Protection of Winkles Bill lest he should feel the scorpions of a General Election.

Would it not be possible—it would certainly be beneficial—for a Government to modify the rigidity of this hanging together business? Could it not be understood that a Government defeat would automatically be followed by a vote of confidence?

If the Government again suffered defeat it would resign, if not, it would simply drop the clause or measure previously defeated. The collective wisdom of the House is greater than Cabinets give it credit for, and if a Bill is statesmanlike and necessary it will not need Whips to force it through the House.

No Government has ever been less encumbered with pledges than this one. No Government could be in a better position to inaugurate such a reform.

Will they do it? It is all Westminster to a china orange that the dumb driven cattle will continue to troop through the lobbies to protect winkles with the Whips cracking close behind them.

A MESSAGE

from

CAPTAIN A. S. CUNNINGHAM-REID, D.F.C., M.P.

(Inserted in the programme of the Regent's Park Open-Air Theatre, St. Marylebone.)

The Theatre was born in the open air countless centuries ago. The Cart of Thespis never passed under a synthetic sky.

From the great drama through the Mediæval Mysteries and Morality Plays, down to the Elizabethan drama in the "Wooden O" of the Globe of Bankside, it is safe to say that the greater number of the world's immortal masterpieces have been produced in the open air. How much this treatment added to their original appreciation may be imagined, for what cyclorama cloth can be compared with the vault of heaven and what limelight is not mocked by a sunbeam? It was only when drama's native woodnotes wild were being hushed into the sedater and more mannered strains suitable to the Court, that it found itself confined within walls.

So Mr. Sydney Carroll is restoring the Theatre to its former freedom in his present venture of presenting plays in that part of Regent's Park still best known to Londoners as the "Botanical Gardens."

More especially is it a freeing of the spirit where Shakespeare is concerned. Shakespeare was country born, and all his working life he carried about in his mind incredibly vivid images and scenes from the life of that Warwickshire countryside which he knew so well. So packed indeed with loved and well-remembered detail are those things of Shakespeare which are laid in the open air that they cannot successfully be compassed within the picture-frame stage of our modern theatre. The Forest of Arden, the wood near Athens, Olivia's Garden, the sheep-shearing in Bohemia: what possible combination of wood, canvas and paint can hope to reproduce their magic? Their place is in such a natural setting as this corner of Regent's Park can offer them, even in the heart of London.

When the late Sir Herbert Tree produced a "Midsummer Night's Dream" he was much criticised for introducing live rabbits. The criticisms were just, for that would-be touch of nature on his stage served only to remind the spectator that he was actually in His Majesty's Theatre. On Mr. Carroll's green sward the case is altered. If he produces a "Midsummer Night's Dream" as I hope he will—when Bottom walks up and down singing of "the ousel cock so black of hue with orange-tawny bill," the bursting of an actual blackbird from a bush would only confirm us in our knowledge that we are in a wood near Athens—or Stratford-on-Avon.

I count myself fortunate that this Open-Air Theatre has come into being in the Constituency which I represent in Parliament.

HATS OFF TO CUNNINGHAM-REID !

By MICHAEL FOOT.

I give you a cry to make the old rafters of Westminster ring, and to make the old grafters shudder, "CUNNINGHAM-REID AND LIBERTY!" I am his defender in this forlorn city.

Let us first survey the high lights [or should it be the hot spots?] of our hero's career. Captain A. S. Cunningham-Reid was selected as the Conservative candidate for St. Marylebone in the year 1932 by a body known as the St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union. That was back in the forgotten days when Lord Baldwin was still "Honest Stan."

He was returned triumphantly at the polls despite—or perhaps because of—the mumbled opposition of Mr. Baldwin. His opponent he described as "the cuckoo candidate," because he wanted to barge into somebody else's nest. Charm, cheek and this fair choice in epithets proved irresistible.

The feat was repeated in 1935 and the Captain turned with a sigh from his triumph on the hustings to his troubles in the home. He emerged from the Divorce Court a sadder, wiser man, free to pursue as he wished his public and private future.

Here it must be admitted our champion's record was not entirely blameless. His votes in the House of Commons were about as frequent as the late Ramsay MacDonald's visits to England. St. Marylebone began to show signs of impatience and something of their disquiet even penetrated into the dim conspiratorial cells where the St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union performed its strange and inscrutable rites.

Then came the war. The world woke up one morning to find that Hitler was in Holland. Some weeks later Marylebone was almost equally baffled to learn that their representative was in Honolulu.

He was engaged, according to his own account, in negotiations about the evacuation of children to the United States. But the St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union was unmoved by these pleas.

They bombarded their M.P. with charges of neglecting his duty. They demanded his recall. They clamoured for his resignation. *And, above all, they selected a new candidate to be substituted as member for Marylebone once the old member succumbed to their complaints.*

It might easily have happened. Had our hero been of a different type, had his grasp of the essential liberties of England been less sure a new member for Marylebone would have appeared at Westminster and the poor electors of Marylebone would have had as much to do with the case as the flowers that bloom in the Spring.

For what is this St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union? It is a collection of old gentlemen who have largely usurped the rights of the electors of their area.

There are hundreds of such societies up and down the country. They choose the candidates to uphold the Conservative cause. They pass judgment on his political opinions, his social status and the size of his bank balance.

Very often the final decision is settled by a visit of some worthy functionary from the Conservative Central Office in London.

In any case, it is these small bodies of mostly self-appointed and certainly self-important persons who largely determine—with the aid of advice from headquarters—the calibre of M.P.s.

They exercise an often rigid survey over the behaviour of their Members.

They caused trouble for Mr. Winston Churchill after his opposition to the Munich Agreement. They sternly rebuked Lord Cranborne, now Dominions Secretary, for a speech he made against Mr. Chamberlain in the old unlamented days of appeasement.

They are the caucus. And it is the caucus which has laid a dead hand on our politics in these recent years when more than ever men of daring and originality and courage to speak the truth were needed in our public life.

Since the war began the power of the caucus has increased. Because elections are now abjured by agreement between the main political parties they have in effect assumed the right, not merely to choose a candidate but actually to appoint a member. Dozens of these nominees have appeared in the Commons since the war began under the glamorous disguise of elected M.P.s.

It would have happened again in Marylebone had it not been for the brave defiance of Captain Cunningham-Reid. He stood up in his place, told the St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union to go to hell, and appealed over their heads to the real electors of Marylebone.

He was their chosen champion, returned to Parliament by proper constitutional procedure five years ago. He gallantly refused to hand over his membership with six hundred a year to some nominee to be smuggled in through the back door of the Commons by the St. Marylebone Constitutional and Conservative Union.

It will be a fine thing if Captain Cunningham-Reid's great stand results in a much closer contact between M.P.s. and their constituents, with these high priests of the Constitutional Union scornfully brushed aside.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION SHORTCOMINGS.

House of Commons, 27th May, 1941.

In the last war, the nation's propaganda was controlled by Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Northcliffe; and I think it is agreed that their efforts contributed largely to winning that war. But it has to be recollected that they were both experts on public opinion.

Who are the controllers of the Ministry of Information to-day? I think the House will be interested to hear what I believe is the latest information about that Ministry. It is a fact that one of those controllers did happen to have a life-long experience of public opinion. He was the only one. He has now gone, under circumstances that, I think, ought to be looked into. His place has been taken by a representative of the B.B.C. There are nine controllers of the Ministry of Information, I am led to understand. I have told about one; he represents the B.B.C. Who are the remaining eight, and what are their qualifications? There are three eminent legal gentlemen, K.C.s, and three civil servants from other Departments. Then there is the keeper of the King's pictures, and finally, last but not least, we find the ubiquitous Lord Davidson, who possibly is better known to the House as J. C. C. Davidson, who, it will be remembered, was one of Mr. Baldwin's advisers in his "safety-first" days. It is not

the fault of this wondrous collection of controllers that they cannot even start to compete with Goebbels in the subtle and delicate art of propaganda; they just have not had the proper training. One might as well go to one's chiropodist to have one's appendix out.

Is there any wonder that the Minister of Information himself publicly complains that the Ministry of Information is run by amateurs? What is preventing him from substituting them by experts? Surely the time has come when the gentlemen should declare and give the players an opportunity of an innings. Goebbels has conscripted—mark you, conscripted—all the best publicity experts in Germany for his Ministry.

I am baffled by what is going on. The whole situation at the Ministry of Information is extraordinary. Why cannot we have experts there who really understand public opinion? There are several outstanding examples in this country who would be only too pleased to serve and whose careers have been built up on understanding human nature. The whole matter is mysterious and it sometimes seems that, though Lord Baldwin is safely ensconced at Bewdley, nevertheless the dead hand of Mr. Baldwin hangs over the Ministry of Information.

This Ministry cannot afford to lose the American stakes. Americans would appreciate it being brought home to them more and more that they had backed the right horse. It would encourage the American public to hurry up and put all they have got upon the British colours instead of dallying and wondering whether they should not hedge a little more on their own horse. The Ministry of Information ought not to relax their efforts for one moment, because the Americans would appreciate our constantly giving confidence to them and informing them how we are continuing to strain every nerve for victory. Remember, there are, and will be, millions in America criticising, and discouraging America from going to war or at war. Our enemies in the United States of America will try to

make out among many other things, that the British are now slacking off, or, to use an Americanism, "passing the buck."

A sufficiency of facts and stories of human interest are not forthcoming from the Ministry of Information or, for that matter, from the Foreign Office, to the United States of America.

It was recently pointed out by the *People* that one of America's principal broadcasting corporations—I think it was Columbia—had cut down by half the time it used to devote to broadcasts from its London correspondents. It just could not get sufficient information. It has no difficulty, though, in filling in the gaps from Berlin. Our method of conveying information must be improved.

THE CINDERELLA OF THE FIGHTING SERVICES.

House of Commons, 19th February, 1942.

Last week I raised the question of better conditions for soldiers, and because I made a comparison between the pay of our soldiers and those of other countries who are over here I was told by the Joint Under-Secretary of State for War, in somewhat sepulchral tones, that I was doing a disservice to the Army.

Since that time I have received innumerable letters on this subject. A great many of those letters have come from

responsible people in or connected with the Services. It is interesting to note that though a number of them endorse what I said on that occasion last week about the disparity of pay between our Forces and Dominion Forces, practically every one of the letters says something about the unfairness between civilian and Service pay. I should like to quote one or two paragraphs from a few of the letters. Here is one from a soldier's wife

living in Warrington. She says :

"Before my husband volunteered, he was getting between £5 10s. and £6 a week. Now my Army allowance is £3 10s., to keep myself and five children. No wonder we get disheartened when we see our neighbours' wives and children dressed up to perfection, and new carpets going in their homes, when my own carpets are worn out and cannot be replaced. By the time my husband gets his discharge, he will be coming home to bare boards. I hope I have not done too much wrong in writing to you, but I just could not help it."

Here is an extract from a letter from a number of men of a certain field company. More than 200 men have subscribed to this letter. This is what they say :

"It is a great source of worry to the soldier that his dependants should have to exist on a miserable pittance from the Government, which should long ago have rationalised civilian and military labour on basic rates."

You will find the same theme running through most of this correspondence. Here is one from a sergeant parachutist. The paragraph that I had intended to read, now I look at it again, is very true but also very rude, and on second thoughts I do not think I will read it. But towards the end of his letter he says :

"The Army stands four-square, ready to fight anyone. All we ask is appreciation in a practical way to enable us and our dependants to live on the same standards as our brothers in industry."

This from a staff sergeant at Aldershot :

"This 'nest egg' should be retrospective, that is to say, with effect from the date of enlistment. To soldiers that have been through Dunkirk, Crete, etc., the knowledge

that after two years of war they now have the colossal sum of one guinea, and after another year's hard fighting the sum of £9 odd, cannot by any means be considered gratifying, the more so when we read in the Press of boys of 15 or 16 years of age earning £9 per week."

I will not weary the House with several others that I had intended to read, but I will convey just one last extract from a letter by an officer in the War Office. This is what he said :

"Sir Edward Grigg denies the statement of resentment in the Forces with evident rancour, and proudly states that there is nothing wrong with the morale, claiming that he has reports at frequent intervals. Does he really suppose a soldier is so naive as to go to some bumbling old general to say, 'No complaints, sir !' just as he does to his orderly officer? Who makes these cheerful reports? Nobody who really knows his men ! I know no one in three Commands who has ever made such a report to higher authority. The men in the Army are 'browned off.'"

I think that these extracts all go to show that there is little doubt as to what is likely to be a major problem at home of this Government in the near future. If I am to receive a reply that there is no real dissatisfaction among the troops, if the Government persist in that ostrich habit, I shall have to ask leave through the usual channels, possibly for a Secret Session—as I do not think it would be proper to convey such information in open Session—so that I can convey to the House certain irrefutable facts and figures that I have in my possession which will show serious conditions.

If my recollection serves me

aright I think it was in a Debate on man-power—it will be within the recollection of many hon. Members of this House—that the Minister of Labour not long ago said in effect that he did not mind what was earned by industrial workers so long as they produced the goods. So, to-day, civilian workers have a higher standard of spending power than they ever had before. I am not grumbling at that for one moment, but I have yet to hear the Secretary of State for War say, “I do not mind what soldiers earn so long as they win battles.” In the meantime the spending power of the ordinary soldier is, I will not say at a pauper’s level, but is at anyhow a miserable rate. And the Joint Under-Secretary explains that situation in the same Debate to which I have already referred by saying :

“Once these rates are raised to a certain point they must affect the rates in time of peace.”

I somehow feel that that is typical of “the old school-tie” mentality, the mentality that continues to approach our war-time problems in a peace-time manner. That is the kind of mentality that is being such a menace to many Government Departments at the present time, which, I hope and believe, if rumour is right, are at this moment being reconstructed. I could name, and I shortly intend to name,

21 other Ministers who are also quite incapable of moving with the times if they are still in office.

What does it matter what we do now, so long as it helps us to win the war? We hear a great deal about peace plans. There was the Atlantic Charter. Over the week-end the Foreign Secretary spent time telling us what we were going to do when we got peace. What is the good of making all these peace plans if there is a possibility still that we may lose the war? Yet the spokesman of the War Office says of something that would immensely encourage our fighting men that “once these rates are raised to a certain point, they must affect the rates in time of peace.” What a difference to the outlook of the Minister of Labour which I have just quoted. For some reasons if only the Minister of Labour could take the place of the present Secretary of State for War (Capt. Margesson) then there might no longer be the necessity for myself and other Members in this House to stand up here time and again and plead the cause of the ordinary soldier, the Cinderella of the Fighting Services, and for so doing only receive in return the kind of insults that were hurled at myself by the spokesman of the War Office on the last occasion when these matters were raised.

I am sure it will be the wish of the House that I should congratulate the hon. and gallant Member (Comdr. Galbraith) who has just spoken. His maiden speech was excellent. It was lucid and well balanced. Having been in this House off and on since 1922, I envied him his confidence—or his apparent confidence.

I regret that the hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. Summers) has just left his place, because I should have liked to make a comment on one or two of his remarks. I notice that he suggested that the Minister of Labour should make an appeal to the working classes to make certain sacrifices and that there should be impressed upon them the damage that their increasing demands would make upon the national security. I would ask the hon. Member whether he is prepared to ask the Minister of Labour at the same time to demand that the *rentier* classes should also make what sacrifices are possible. It is important to make it clear that in this war there are no class distinctions and that we expect sacrifices from all members of the community.

I have listened to the whole of the Debate. The trend of it has only confirmed the fact that what is gnawing at the very vitals of the nation is widespread, unfavourable comparisons. That has been more or less agreed upon by all

speakers. Comparisons are made between what can be earned and saved in the Services and what can be earned and saved in Civvy Street. We are told that from Civvy Street £10,000,000 a week can be invested in War Loans, but in the Services we know that practically nothing can be invested because the people there have no savings. The miner compares his financial lot with that of the skilled worker in a war factory who sometimes collects £20 a week. There cannot be a great number who receive such a wage as that, but the comparison still remains. The agricultural worker knows what the labourer is receiving in some nearby aerodrome construction work. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. G. Griffiths), who I regret is not in his place, compared only the other day his £600 a year with my spendable income. In passing, I would like to point out that there is not such a great difference between the two. Then the engineers see no reason why they should be left out of the inflationary picture, and they demand a rise which has been estimated, I understand, to amount to approximately £200,000,000 a year. So the ever-mounting spiral of comparison goes on. Men and women become more and more discontented and unsettled, and with good reason in the case of many who are in the Services. In some other

spheres it is just the natural human urge to be equal with wage earners in other industries.

The Government admit frankly that this is an immense psychological problem. They point out that the only alternative is for the Government to fix the amount which each wage earner should receive. In reference to that, a Government spokesman said, the week before last :

"Does anybody really suppose that the Government could undertake to regulate the size of wages in this country without the question arising, 'What about salaries? What about Directors' fees? What about the returns on investment?'"

I agree with that profoundly. If there are to be sacrifices there must be all round equality of sacrifice. Just as there are some wage earners who get more than is necessary to support them in modest comfort, so the same applies to the rentier classes, though the majority of them have been hit hard by war taxation. I agree that in both spheres, those who have too much, taking into account the present necessity for austerity, are decidedly in the minority. But this is the point : So long as that minority exists, comparisons and demands will be made, and something has got to be done about that. Yet the Government are not prepared, as has already been done in the United States, to grasp this nettle by stabilising wages.

"If somebody will come here and prove to me there is some third course which combines the advantages of both"—

that is to say of the present system of bargaining or wage fixation—

"I am sure no one would be better pleased than my right hon. Friend the Minister of Labour."

Those are not my words. The Lord Chancellor said that a week or so ago. Those were his very words. With such exalted encouragement

MR. MARSHALL (Sheffield, Brightside) : Did not the Lord Chancellor in that speech pay a very fine tribute to the present way of fixing wages ?

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID : That may be, but I do not wish the hon. Gentleman to misunderstand me. I am not for one moment saying that under the present system there should not be increases of wages. With what the Lord Chancellor said on that question I am entirely in agreement.

As the Lord Chancellor has suggested that he desires, if possible, to find some third course, I think we might examine that for one moment. It is admitted that the present labour conditions are unsatisfactory, for they allow wage earners to be comparing their lot constantly and unfavourably with that of other wage earners, and this leads to discontent and ever-increasing demands. The alternative sometimes pressed on the Government is that they should stabilise wages at present rates, but what would be the good of stabilising wages where they are at present when, at the same time, that would auto-

matically stabilise the discontent caused by the present comparisons? Then again if a limit was placed on the amount that wage earners could earn—and I do not say one should place such a limit under the present system—why should there then not be a limit on what other sections of the community can earn? In this desperate fight for existence citizens should not try to get more out of the war than that which is necessary for their reasonable expenses, plus some financial reward for skill and responsibility.

That surely should be the principle underlying the third course canvassed by the Lord Chancellor, and it seems to me well worth trying. We should courageously embark on a revolutionary system of something approaching real equality. Some political leaders claim that there is already to-day equality of sacrifice. I am inclined to agree with some members of the Army who use that phrase "Equality of sacrifice" as a term of sarcasm.

Here very briefly is an outline of a proposed new system for the duration of the war. People who are better qualified to judge these matters tell me that it is a scheme that could well be a basis for an advantageous alternative to the present unsatisfactory and dangerous state of affairs. In the first place, every adult should be conscripted to come under martial law so that, whether he or she is an industrial worker or a director of the Bank of

England, he or she should be liable to be shot for the same reasons that soldiers can be shot. At the same time the income, which includes wages, of every individual in the country who comes within the ambit of Income Tax should also be conscripted. Under such conditions citizens would have sufficient income allowed them from what they receive to cover their reasonable expenses, plus a bonus according to skill and responsibility. It stands to reason that a skilled worker is deserving of more than an apprentice, or that a sergeant is deserving of more than a raw recruit. The necessary individual returns—and I am glad to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer there—would be no more complicated than the present individual taxation forms, all of which under the proposed system could be done away with, as could all other direct taxation on the individual.

In practice a large proportion of the population would find that they had the same amount to spend as now. The soldier and his dependants would be better off, and would no longer be at the present disadvantage to the industrial worker. The spendable income of the majority of the Members of Parliament in this House, especially Labour Members of Parliament, would be about the same; but other M.P.s, including myself and the Minister of Labour, who, I see, has just come in, would be some-

what worse off. Under this scheme, properly adjusted by the Inland Revenue experts, the State would benefit, possibly financially, but certainly from the point of view of national morale. No longer would there be the same opportunity for considerable sections of the community to be envious of others, for to a far greater extent everybody would be in the same boat.

I would merely say this in conclusion. Let this House give up petty nibbling at a huge problem which can only be solved by immense courage on the part of the Government. They have already got the power to do this. Let us face up to the fact that so long as we presumably run the nation on democratic lines we shall never get that whole-

hearted war effort necessary until there is no longer any real cause for one section of the population to demand to be treated the same as some other section who are or appear to be better off, that is to say, until every individual in the country, especially the majority of the Services, feel that at last there is something approaching real equality of sacrifice. We shall be heading for trouble if we continue to treat the grievances of those in the Services as well as those in certain industries as separate problems, because they are all, as I have attempted to show, inter-dependent, for each forms part of one vast problem and as such should be approached in a far wider and more statesmanlike manner than is being done at present.

PRINCE PAUL AND PRINCESS OLGA OF YUGOSLAVIA.

House of Commons, 17th November, 1942.

Last Wednesday the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Richard Law) made a personal attack upon me in such a manner that it left the door wide open to rude retorts in return had I desired. His famous and respected father would never have descended to such second-rate methods, which I have not the slightest intention of following. The facts that I put forward do not require personal abuse to bolster them up. When the Under-Secretary was not abus-

ing me he was misquoting me. He suggested that I had said that Prince Paul was living a life of luxury and ease at the expense of the British Government. I had said nothing of the kind. I challenged him at the time and he was unable to substantiate that terminological inexactitude. He said I had tried to make out that Prince Paul was "a dangerous tiger." On the contrary, I said that he was a "traitorous rat." If the Under-Secretary thinks that rats are tigers, it

may prove very awkward for him some day if he reverses the mistake. I had pointed out that our favoured treatment of such an enemy of Yugoslavia and of Russia was open to be misunderstood by those countries. The Under-Secretary's naive reply was to accuse me of making Yugoslavia and Russia mistrust us—an elementary retort not unlike that of the small boy who puts out his tongue and shouts, "Sucks, you're another."

On the day that the Government spokesman replied to my speech we had from my hon. Friend the Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. A. Bevan) one of the most brilliant and forceful contributions it has ever been my pleasure to listen to in this House. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs referred to it as a "rollicking" speech, dismissing it with a sneer and so avoiding giving any reasoned answer whatever. When it came to my turn—and my most pertinent and direct questions were significantly left unanswered—it had become abundantly apparent that they would have been replied to soon enough if the answers had been favourable to the Government. No doubt the House will appreciate why these questions were left unanswered when I tell them what they were: (1) Is the traitor Prince Paul, who is a political prisoner in Kenya, allowed on occasions to go about by himself? (2) Is Princess Olga, like her husband, also a political prisoner and, if not, why not?

(3) How is Princess Olga's arrival in this country reconciled with the fact that the Government have made a strict rule that no foreigner should be allowed into this country unless our direct national interests justifies such a course?

(4) On similar compassionate grounds, would the same facilities to come to this country be given to an ordinary loyal British woman residing in Kenya as have been given to the royal wife of a foreign enemy of this country?

I think that the House will agree that these are reasonable and important questions and that they should be answered. If they are not answered, grave misgivings are bound to remain and to grow. In spite of any insults that are yet to be hurled at me in future by those who are temporarily in power, I intend to pursue this matter until I get satisfactory assurances.

MR. SPEAKER: After looking at Erskine May I have come to the conclusion that the hon. and gallant Member is making a repetition of a Debate which has taken place in the House. It says:

"It is a wholesome restraint upon Members to prevent them from reviving a Debate already Concluded; and there would be little use in preventing the same question or Bill from being offered twice in the same session if, without being offered, its merits might be discussed again and again."

The hon. and gallant Member is clearly going against that Rule, and I must ask him to go on to some other subject.

We cannot have a repetition of the other day's Debate.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: Am I entitled to make reference to what occurred in a previous Debate?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. and gallant Member was making a good deal more than reference. He was almost quoting the previous Debate from the OFFICIAL REPORT.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I bow to your Ruling, and in that event I shall not continue on the lines to which you have drawn my attention.

MR. SPEAKER: I would go further and ask the hon. and gallant Member to get on to some other subject.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: Do you mean, Sir, some subject other than the new facts to which I desire to draw attention about Prince Paul?

MR. SPEAKER: Some other subject than Prince Paul. That has already been debated this Session.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: In that case, Sir, I would respectfully point out to you that personal remarks were made against me the other day and that I have no opportunity of replying to them except on the Adjournment, and I always understood that the Adjournment was for such purposes as that.

MR. SPEAKER: The Adjournment is certainly not for the purpose of renewing a Debate which took place two or three days ago.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: There are completely different aspects which I desire to raise, and with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will do so. The only reason the Government was able to put forward for giving such privileged, lenient treatment to this royal personage, Prince Paul, was that he is a weak man who would never be a danger to anyone. On that point

MR. SPEAKER: Surely that is the same subject which the hon. and gallant Member has already raised, and I say that he cannot go on with that subject.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: This is a very important matter which concerns the security of this country. A serious matter of principle is also involved, and I shall now be compelled, Sir, to circulate what I intended to say to hon. Members of this House and to the Press.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. and gallant Member is quite at liberty to circulate what he likes to the Press and to hon. Members of this House.

C-R subsequently challenged the Speaker's ruling, and after a long argument the Speaker as good as admitted that he should have allowed C-R to raise "new matter" concerning Prince Paul and gave him permission to do so in the future. C-R, though, had by then carried out what he said he would do and circulated that part of his speech which had been stopped, and here it is:—

"The only reason that the Government was able to put forward for giving such privi-

leged lenient treatment to this Royal quisling was 'that Prince Paul is a weak man who would never be a danger to anyone.' What an astonishing statement, for it is weak people who are often more dangerous than others. Look at Pétain. Since when have quislings necessarily been strong men? In Prince Paul's case it is his very weakness that is the menace. In my original speech I actually used the word 'weak' to describe this man, and it was his wife that I claimed had the dominant character. The Foreign Office, by corroborating that Prince Paul is a weak man, has made my case for me, and this is the present position.

"Princess Olga comes to this country on compassionate grounds. Over here she enjoys a privileged position inasmuch as she has been with the kind of people who of necessity have inside information concerning the war. As the British Government has seen fit to place no restrictions upon her and has in fact, given her *carte blanche* over here, those who meet her see no more reason to be guarded in their conversation than they would be with those select people whom they find her with. Can the Government inform the House whether the Princess, while over here, has come in contact with any of the heads connected with our Navy, Army, Air Force, or Combined Operations? They should certainly know this.

"Princess Olga is likely eventually to return to her

husband in Kenya. In all good faith she might quite naturally tell her husband what she has seen and heard whilst in England, and as she was in the favoured position of constantly being with people who were 'in the know,' her information could no doubt be most interesting and certainly enlightening to Prince Paul. The Prince can go practically where he likes in Kenya, unattended. Does the Government suggest that Kenya is unique inasmuch as there are no Nazi agents there? Our leniency to this traitor gives him every opportunity to get in touch with, or be got in touch by, our enemies and to convey to them information straight from circles that no ordinary person could ever hope to penetrate—information which could be invaluable to the enemy and bring death to Britishers, Americans, Russians and other Allies.

"The fact that Prince Paul is a weak man makes the danger all the more possible. A weak man is all the more likely to do a foolish thing voluntarily, also a weak man can be the more easily intimidated into giving information. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs has indicated yet a third contingency, for he himself suggested that Prince Paul without meaning it could easily be—to quote the Under-Secretary's very words, 'used as a pawn by the Axis powers.' The Prince being allowed to mix freely with all and sundry could even innocently convey

useful information to some presumed friend of the Allies who in reality was nothing of the kind.

"Could the Government definitely state that any of the contingencies I have just suggested are impossible? Could the Government announce that this weak man is not capable of being a traitor to his country or to ours? I challenge them to make such a statement. If the Government cannot make such a statement, then what right have they to allow his family to be in a position to get inside information concerning our war effort and convey it to the Prince for him weakly to pass it on. If there is the slightest chance of the enemy being assisted, or of even just one life being lost, how dare the Government facilitate that chance?

"Look at the hundreds of ordinary folk who, under the Home Secretary's Regulation Order 18B, have been locked up by the Government. It is admitted that many of these may be harmless, but their former associations had made such a precaution advisable in the interests of national security. Knowing the flimsy reasons why some of these wretched 18B Britishers are in close confinement, and comparing their past associations with the past and present associations of this foreign Princess, you cannot blame people for 'seeing red' when it is made so blatantly clear that in this country in spite of lip-service to the contrary there still remains a

different set of laws for the privileged few.

"As to the Government spokesman's statement that our country would approve of Princess Olga's visit, I presume he bases that assertion on the sentimental grounds that all our hearts would desire to respond to. Does he suggest, though, that the country would approve of her visit because our direct national interest justified such a course? Does he suggest that the country would approve on the grounds of national security, and that this foreign lady should be treated so differently from ordinary British citizens who have been locked up for years and in some cases for reasons much less suspect than apply to Princess Olga? Would the country approve of this Royal wife of a quisling being given facilities and privileges to come to this country from Africa that would not be accorded to any ordinary loyal British woman whose sister in England was one of the thousands of tragic women who have lost their husbands in this war? Does the Government spokesman still think that if the country knew all this they would really approve of Princess Olga's visit?

"The Government expected to get away with it and possibly they relied on the fact that so little was known of Princess Olga's background or, alternatively, that even if that background was appreciated, nobody, because of the delicate

circumstances that arise, would be inclined to bring the matter forward. But that is not sufficient reason for permitting the Government to continue with a serious blunder that may cost lives, or for the Government to allow those whom we look up

to and respect to be placed in such a false position, by reason of which it can be said that by getting privileges in war-time that would never be accorded to others it is possible that the security of the nation and of our Allies be endangered."

SOLDIERS AND POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS.

House of Commons, 31st March, 1944.

The argument that soldiers should keep out of the political arena has whiskers on it. It dates back to the time when the Army was largely made up of men who joined voluntarily, because the Army was a profession and who, as a result, gave up certain citizen rights. Nobody can say that the conditions which existed when these regulations were formulated exist now. The Army of to-day is largely made up of civilians who have been temporarily put into uniform by the Government in order that they may fight for us. We should be grateful, and we are grateful to these men in the Army, for what they are doing, but do the Government now show their gratitude by saying in effect: "You can fight for us; you can be mutilated and you can die for your ideals; but, in the meantime, you may on no account attempt to shape the kind of ideals you are fighting for, not even when you are off duty and out of uniform." If that is the kind of reasoning which is going on at the War Office,

it is a very "Pixilated" reasoning and, I think, extremely dangerous.

Another argument that might be put forward is that soldiers do not want this right. I am sorry that Mr. Quintin Hogg is not in his usual place, because I think it was he who, on some previous occasion, made the statement that, in his opinion and from his experience, the soldiers do not want the right for which I am asking. I wondered at the time how he came to that conclusion. I do not believe that the ordinary soldier confides everything to his officer, and anyhow, I think it is a very brave man indeed who claims to know the mind of every one of the millions of men who are in the Army. All I know, having raised this same matter on the appropriate occasion last year, is that I got a spate of letters from members of the Forces, which convinces me that a great number of people in the Army would like to have this right. Let us, however, presume for the moment that Mr. Quintin Hogg has some

occult powers and is able to read the minds of all the millions of men in the Army. Even though that sweeping assumption were accorded, it is still no argument for depriving the soldiers of a right that, in justice, they are entitled to, should they desire to exercise it.

It might even be claimed that morale and discipline could be adversely affected if soldiers were allowed, when off duty, publicly to express their political beliefs. I would be prepared to say—and I would take ten to one on it at this moment—that no representative of the War Office would dare to stand at that Box and make such an assertion, for he would know better than anybody that the surest way to impair morale and discipline in the Forces is to stifle grievances, and that to allow grievances to be ventilated is a safety valve. I think we know the truth of that full well in the House of Commons. If it were not for the fact that we are able to let off steam now and again here, it would be a very bad thing for Democracy. Assuming for the moment, however, that that contention

MAJOR SIR DERRICK GUNSTON (Thornbury) : I am sorry to interrupt my hon. and gallant Friend, but I think he said a little earlier that a soldier or an airman should not be allowed to criticise military operations. If he proposes to allow soldiers to hold meetings and air their grievances, even

though they are not on military matters, does that still not constitute criticism of the "higher-ups" ? Is the hon. and gallant Member against that criticism?

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I quite agree with my hon. and gallant Friend that they have no right to air any grievances where Service matters are concerned, but I think they should have the right to air grievances as to the attitude of the Government on the Beveridge Report, the Prime Minister's Four-Year Plan and anything like that—anything except what has to do with their own Services.

LIEUT.-COLONEL SIR THOMAS MOORE (Ayr Burghs) : Can my hon. and gallant Friend define some of these phrases before he goes any further? What is meant by "political controversy" ? What exactly does it mean, in the view of my hon. and gallant Friend?

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I really should have thought the meaning was quite clear. So far as the soldier is concerned, political controversy would mean any form of controversy relating to politics, that did not concern the Services. Perhaps I might return to the point I was making, which was that it would be difficult to claim that, if the soldiers were given the proposed advantage, it would be bad for morale and discipline. It is generally agreed that that would not be the case. Why, in Heaven's name, just for the sake of obstinacy and of clinging to an outworn tradition,

deny to the citizen soldier—after all, he is a citizen soldier—something which could do no harm and might do a great deal of good, and which ought to be his by right—that is to say, if we are indeed fighting for democracy? Many people are beginning to have doubts about this. I think that I have every justification for saying that those doubts have been materially increased this week by the alarming realisation that a majority vote of the people's representatives in Parliament counts for nothing.

As things are now, the regulations concerning a soldier's political behaviour are farcical. In the first place, they are so unfair that nothing the authorities can do will prevent these out-of-date regulations being continuously defied. Only the other day we heard from an hon. and gallant Member who has recently come here, that when he was in the Air Force he defied these regulations, and I recollect that in a recent Debate several hon. Members gave instances in which that was being done all the time. On the other hand, there are prosecutions from time to time. These regulations are so unfair and so nebulous that they are, all the time, being flouted. That fact, in itself, is not conducive to very good discipline in the Army.

We also have the absurd anomaly that a soldier can express his views from the largest platform imaginable, that is, the Press, but he is denied the right to express

identical views from the platform of a small village hall at Muddleton-on-the-Mud. Further, it has been stated by a War Office Minister—and this is an important point—that a soldier on leave, and in mufti, can ask questions at a political meeting provided that the meeting is in his own constituency. If he can do that in his own constituency, why in the name of reason is he forced to remain dumb at a meeting in another constituency if he is anxious for some information? There might, for example, be a General Election before the end of the war. The soldier's constituency might be in the North of Scotland and he would not have facilities, or be given the opportunity, to visit his constituency. But he might want to know the view of an official party represented by a certain candidate. The official view is put forward by all the candidates of a party all over the country. The policy is, more or less, the same. He may not be able to get it from the candidate for whom he himself will be voting or not voting as the case may be, but by going to a meeting in another constituency which is within reach, and asking questions of a candidate there, he can get the information to which he is entitled.

The point has been established that a soldier in his constituency can ask questions, but then again what is a question? That seems to require a considerable amount of defining. I think that you,

Mr. Deputy Chairman, with your great experience, would have considerable difficulty in deciding sometimes in this Committee, what is the precise psychological moment when a question is not a speech. We know perfectly well that if we are a little astute we can often make a speech in the form of a question. If a soldier in mufti attends a public meeting, do hon. Members mean to say that the chairman there has the same experience as the Chairman of this Committee, and has the authority to say, if that soldier asks a question "I know that you are a soldier in mufti. Your question is becoming a speech. You must stop or you will get into trouble"? The whole thing is farcical. What it boils down to is this: As things are now, a soldier is entitled to express his political views in the Press,

and, in certain circumstances, he can speak at a public meeting, if he is cute enough to preface his remarks by saying "I would like to ask" or something like that, and put it in the form of a question. Taking it all in all, is it not rather petty on the part of the Government to say that a soldier can express political views in the Press, but cannot express the same views at a public meeting unless he puts them in the form of a question? I trust that the Government will see their way on this occasion to make this concession. It is a small concession, but it can have a large beneficial result. It will give immense satisfaction to a large number of people, and there is no sound justification for withholding this right from those to whom we owe so much.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

House of Commons, 9th May, 1944.

I want to raise the question of Parliamentary Reform. Once upon a time I was an official member of a political party, but recently, by my political actions, I deliberately severed myself from any party. The natural inference to be drawn from that would be that I am against parties. On the contrary, I have no quarrel with the party system as such. My objection is that the party system has been carried too far, to the unjustifiable length of preventing the representa-

tives of the people acting in Parliament in a way that they, and very often the majority of their constituents, think right. There was a glaring example only the other day, and there had been many examples before then. The example to which I am referring was when Members of Parliament were forced by the party managers to retract their decision concerning an increase of pay for certain women workers. It seems to me that there is a growing tendency for M.P.s to

be more Members of Parties and less Members of Parliament.

I intend to put both sides of this question. I believe that I would be stating the official Government case against more freedom of voting in Parliament if I were to say that as a Government have to go to the country if they have a series of minor defeats in quick succession, or if they have a defeat on a major issue, and that if all Government Party M.P.s voted in Parliament just as they please, the situation could well become intolerable from any Government's point of view. For, in the event of constant changes of administration, as might occur in such circumstances, there would be no continuity of national policy, and the same conditions might prevail as did in France with such disastrous consequences. I hope that that will be considered a fair interpretation of the official case. Anyhow it sounds a plausible justification for the party Whips—that is to say, the party managers—demanding that Members of Parliament shall do what they are told, and not what they would sometimes like to do, as dictated by their consciences and the fitness of things.

The official explanation—and I have often heard it—is a cunning one, so much so that it is accepted by what one might even call undocile Members, those Members who resent being fettered. The result is that the Whips and

other party functionaries often laugh up their sleeves, because they know, just as many Members know, that that time-worn excuse for demoralising M.P.s does not bear close examination. They also know that an alternative workable procedure could be arranged by a very simple Parliamentary reform. There may be several ways of dealing with this, but here is one. I have discussed this method with one or two people who know considerably more about procedure than I do, and I am informed there is no reason why it should not work. It should be recognised that the only adverse vote upon which a Government would be expected to resign would be if they did not carry a Vote of Confidence in the Government as a whole, and that in no circumstances should any such Vote of Confidence in the Government as a whole be linked up with the particular detail of Government policy that the majority by their votes did not approve of.

The following would be the course of events. When the Government was defeated in the Division Lobby on any issue, that Vote to be followed by a definite Vote of Confidence in the Government as a whole, on the understanding that, if they were defeated on that, there would either be a new Government or a General Election would be called. If not defeated, the Government would bow to the will of the House on the particular issue in question and carry on, or, if

the Government were still anxious to have their way on the issue upon which they were originally defeated, they would reintroduce it, not as a Vote of Confidence, but in the ordinary way, and, if again defeated, it would then be the Government's responsibility whether they accepted such a determined wish of the majority of the House on this particular matter or whether they preferred to consult the majority outside the House. In that case, they might look very silly and lose much support, having just received a Vote of Confidence in their stewardship as a whole from the representatives of the people in Parliament.

The proposed revised procedure would mean that staunch supporters of the Government could, by their vote, defeat some particular aspect of the Government's programme without necessarily right away jeopardising the life of that Government, and their attitude would be made clear when, subsequently, they supported a Vote of Confidence in the Government as a whole.

Provided that the Government—any Government—was reasonably sound, its followers would undoubtedly support the second Vote of Confidence in the Government as a whole, because to put it at its lowest level, no hon. Member enjoys having to expend hundreds of pounds for election expenses as many have to do, and, into the bargain, possibly losing his seat and £600 a year.

I know full well that this question of Parliamentary reform cannot be adequately dealt with in a short Adjournment Debate. Consequently, to use the parlance of the movies, I am merely employing this occasion as what one might term a "trailer," which I hope will have the effect of bringing to the House, and possibly to the Minister in charge, the desirability of time being given, possibly after Whitsun, for a full Debate on this subject. I am not asking the Minister to-day for any long reply, but I am asking him that he will be so good as to convey what I have said, and what I am going to say, to the Leader of the House, and that possibly, when he finds, as I hope he will, that a large number of hon. Members of this House would like to discuss this all-important question of Parliamentary Reform, a full day will be given to it.

The simple voting procedure that I have outlined would do away with that constant General Election boggy which the Whips have used for so long and so effectively to justify their despotic control. Nobody could possibly complain—and it is essential that there should be Whips—if they confined their persuasion of M.P.s to vote in a certain direction by using persuasion which was fair. It will be agreed that an M.P. very properly has not the right or the power to say to his electors, "Unless you vote for me, you will not get on in your career,

in fact, however efficient you are, I can, and shall, see to it that you are not to be given a chance, or, alternatively, if you vote for me, I will advance your financial and social position, and possibly both." Such a practice would be most immoral but it is exactly what happens in Parliament. The people whose job it is to persuade Members of Parliament to vote in a certain direction are the same people who have the power to make them support the Government. The Government Whips have it in their power constantly to threaten the representatives of the people with a General Election and other dire penalties, such as taking away from a Member at a subsequent election the support of a powerful party machine or possibly the letter of endorsement from a popular Prime Minister. But the power of the Government Whips only starts there. It is they who make recommendations for Government jobs and it is the Chief Whip, alias the Patronage Secretary, who doles out the patronage.

The boys in the back room have a bun for practically every taste. If the recipient would be content with a minor civilian decoration, they can provide it. It may be a knighthood, it may be a marquissate, it may be a governorship abroad or a lord lieutenantcy—they have got them all. They can cater for the vanity or the ambition of practically any man. Surely the time is long overdue when the Government

party Whips should most certainly be completely divorced from patronage. Patronage, if we must have it, should be left entirely to the Lord Chamberlain's Office, where a special permanent commission should be established, charged solely with preferment. It would be composed of men and women of integrity, as far removed from the political arena as possible, and this commission would take over the patronage power now possessed by the Party Whips and make recommendations to the Lord Chamberlain. The various established political parties would make suggestions to the commission as would other accredited bodies, but the commission would be under no obligation to accept those recommendations, which it would only do after the most careful scrutiny. They would make recommendations for all civilian honours, including lord lieutenantships and suchlike. Where admissions to the peerage were deemed necessary, for parliamentary purposes, the commission should determine the elevations.

Anyhow, this procedure would have this effect: it would check the practice of handing out rewards to party hacks. It is a national disgrace that national honours should be handed out for party services and to recoup party coffers. If such a permanent commission came into being, the Whips, being relieved of their virtual power to recommend honour, in most cases of

having those recommendations accepted, the ordinary Member of Parliament, having no designs on becoming a Minister, would be less inclined to submit to a tyranny that brooked little advantage to himself and even less to the nation. Many such Members would, possibly, revert to the city or the backwoods from whence they came, and the Whips would be restricted to exercising their reactionary compulsion on Members dominated mainly by hope of office, and to their proper function which, I maintain, is to arrange Government business in Parliament. As things are now, if a party M.P. persists in being politically progressive and keeps abreast of our times he will very likely run foul of his Whips' Office, in which case he will be for the "high jump," as has occurred to many distinguished Members of this House.

I would remind the House of the case of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for East Bristol (Sir S. Cripps); then there is the case of the hon. Member for Rugby (Mr. W. J. Brown) and the case of the hon. and learned Member for North Ham-mer-

smith (Mr. Pritt). They have all been through it, and it is all for the same kind of reason. Parliament to-day is run too much by the party caucuses and not enough by the representatives of the people as, I understand, was originally constitutionally intended. The majority of key Government positions to-day are not filled by the best that the country can provide, but are filled by the best party men. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Had our country not been ruled by the privileged inefficients produced by our peculiar party system Germany would never have been allowed to rearm and it is possible that this war might not have taken place.

The abuse of our political system has a lot to account for. For years now it would appear that Governments have taken advantage of the people's political ignorance. If only the public could learn the lessons of the past and realise what is the grim prospect for the future unless they bestir themselves and prod Parliamentarians from their Rip Van Winkle lethargy, and insist that we put our House in order.

THE MOCKERY OF DEMOCRACY.

House of Commons, 28th April 1944.

For the first time since the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mr. Reakes) has been in this House, I find myself in disagreement with him, but that no doubt is the prerogative of

independence. I would like to join issue with him on one matter. He made a statement—I do not think he quite realised it, or perhaps he did not use the words he intended

to use—the effect of which was that most editors were against the cause of the strikers. I think that is not fair to the editors, because editors do not decide policy. That has nothing to do with editors or their Press correspondents. The newspaper proprietors are the people that should bear the onus.

This strike menace, unless handled properly, can develop into one of the most serious things that has happened to this country since Dunkirk. The Cabinet, without consulting the representatives of the people in this House, have decided upon drastic measures to deal with this menace. If ever there was a responsibility that should have been shared with Parliament, it was this one, for it entails a decision that can be of the gravest importance to the very existence of this country, and not only to our existence but also to the future of our Dominions, Colonies and Allies, who, I think, are also worthy of some consideration.

If Mr. Speaker were in the Chair now he would no doubt, recollect that as long ago as 6th April, before we went away for the Recess, I asked his permission to intervene during that Adjournment Debate, to warn the Government on this very matter, and to ask that they should not come to any definite decision before they had consulted this House. Mr. Speaker was good enough to say that, though he had a full

programme, there might be an opportunity of my getting in, but, during that Debate, events of momentous importance came up which took the shape of a long discussion on the merits and demerits of the Kitchen Committee. In fact, two hon. Members had to go so far as to make the very serious complaint that, on more than three occasions at lunch time, fish was off by one o'clock. As a result, there was no time left to discuss the comparatively unimportant question whether the Government should consult the House on a grave matter of national importance. As it was, the Government, deterred by no word of warning from Members, proceeded to ignore the House and to give powers to the trade unions that may eventually have the effect of making not the trade unions, but the trade union leaders, more powerful than the Members of this House. That, of course, would not be very difficult.

Assume for the sake of argument that this decision of the Cabinet to deal with the strike menace is the correct one, and turns out in every way to be satisfactory. Even though that be so, the fact still remains that the Cabinet, by flouting the rights and duties of Parliament, has done great damage to the prestige of our form of government. How much more will this be the case, if this decision of the Cabinet turns out to be a wrong decision? If, originally, the procedure

which had been decided by the Cabinet had been agreed on by the country as a whole, that is to say, through its elected representatives in this House, then the responsibility for anything that occurred would be on the shoulders of the majority, which would be right and proper. But as it is, if the decision proves to be wrong, and serious repercussions ensue, the majority of the country, knowing that their representatives were not consulted, are going to have their faith in so-called democratic government seriously undermined.

As has already been pointed out to-day by the mover of the Motion, the faith of the people in democracy was very badly shaken before the Government made this, their latest, constitutional blunder. Their faith began to be slightly rocked each time the Government extended arbitrarily their proper span of life without bothering to evoke that little constitutional practice of consulting the will of the people at a General Election. But democracy was given an even further jolt, when insult was added to injury and the head of this Methuselah Government, the present Prime Minister, threatened the electors with dire consequences if they did not support the candidates that he sponsored at by-elections. It did not stop at that, for he referred to those who opposed his party hacks as "swindlers." As a result, and as those hon. Members who get round the country realise, there were

thousands muttering, "This is all a very strange idea of how democracy works in practice," but these mutterings turned to growls when they suddenly realised that, on the top of it all, a great deal of our Parliamentary procedure in this House was becoming a farce and a waste of time.

No Member of this House could possibly disagree that the other day the representatives of the people in this House made a majority decision and as that decision was not in accord with the wishes of the Government, the Government forced Members of Parliament to reverse their decision, so to speak, to eat their votes, which, after all, was not unreminiscent of the Fascist castor-oil practices. That Members of Parliament did not maintain, on that occasion, the strength of their convictions was bad enough—"rubber stamps" became a universal term of derision throughout the country—but what has done irreparable harm has been that the Government, not content with flouting the people in this amazing unconstitutional manner, capped it all by not consulting the representatives of the people in Parliament on a policy of vital significance to the nation, that of how to deal with the grim menace of strikes in war-time.

There is no doubt at all that this has given a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure to a section of the community. The extremists in this country, the

Trotskyites and anybody like that, are delighted. They are only too anxious that our form of democracy should become discredited. Taking the long view, our leaders, by their high-handed behaviour, are doing an immense disservice to the nation. They have enjoyed so many years of continual office and of immense power, which we, the Members of this House, have given them, that it has gone to their heads, with the result that they now not only ignore, but have literally become contemptuous of Parliament. Human nature being what it is, you cannot altogether blame them, because it is, apparently so easy to take

advantage of this House as at present constituted. The majority are either too old, too stale, too mesmerised, too honour-seeking or just too, too Tory, to do anything else but be a drab chorus chanting a shrill subservient "Yes, yes, yes." But a day of reckoning is bound to come and in the meantime, if the majority of Conservative Members of Parliament are content to sit down, either occasionally in this House or more often in their own houses, and complacently relinquish the nation's constitutional practices and safeguards, they will only have themselves to blame if, as a result, unnecessary disasters come their way.

CHURCHILL'S UNNECESSARY RISK.

House of Commons, 15th June, 1944.

Mr. Churchill is invaluable to the successful prosecution of this war. The people of this country, and of all the threatened nations, remembering what he was able to do for their morale in the darkest hours, are inspired, now that the horizon has cleared and he is still at the helm, to put all they have got into bringing this war to an early conclusion. The ever-present figure of a human bull-dog perpetually smoking a cigar, has become a symbol of tenacity of purpose and a mascot of good luck to the freedom-loving world. The repercussions could be far-reaching and serious if anything were to happen to him.

He has created quite enough anxiety already by his illnesses. The Prime Minister should not risk his life unnecessarily, and I consider that this is a matter of urgent public importance, because, unless discouraged, he may be off again as soon as he gets out of the sight of his anxious friends in this House.

The time will come when the area of liberated France will be large, no longer just a beachhead upon which enemy bombs and shells can be concentrated, and where snipers and quislings can lie in wait. Surely, that will be a more prudent occasion for the Prime Minister to visit France should

he intend to do so again. It would be futile now to put forward the argument that there was little risk attaching to his visit, because those of us who have been reading the newspapers, and all the interesting facts which war correspondents have told us, are well aware that the destroyer on which he went over actually went into action on that crossing. Of course, he remained on the bridge. He saw enemy bombs dropped, and I have here a Press photograph—and a very good one, too—of the right hon. Gentleman standing in the open, looking at enemy planes overhead. There was also the danger of enemy shell fire and unexploded mines, but to my mind the greatest folly was to allow him to tour around in an open jeep.

All the time, we have been hearing stories of snipers behind our lines, who roam around, move their position at night, some wearing civilian clothes, to say nothing of the quislings, and also those French girls we heard about through the Press yesterday who, out of the blue, fired upon our soldiers and killed many. [An HON. MEMBER: "German girls."] Well, it would not make very much difference, to me, if I were killed by a girl sniper, whether she was German or French, but the Press certainly said yesterday that they were French girls. However, put it this way: Was there ever such a good target as the one presented by our not inconspicuous Prime Minister perch-

ed up high on a Jeep? Nobody could have mistaken or missed that massive figure, complete with cigar to identify him. What an opportunity that presented to his enemies to murder him.

When this country heard that our Prime Minister had gone to the Normandy front, the first reaction of the average person, before soberer thoughts set in, was "Good old stout-hearted Winnie!" That is all very fine and large, but what would the public say if disaster had resulted, or if disaster resulted in the future from a similar adventure? So far as our European battle front is concerned, the Supreme Commander has absolute jurisdiction. In the circumstances that I have suggested, it is he who would be blamed for having allowed the Prime Minister to go to France. The Supreme Commander is an American. Would such a situation, had it occurred, or should it for any unfortunate reason occur, be to the advantage of friendly relations between the two nations? I think not, and I think that is a consideration that ought to be taken into account.

At this stage of the Second Front those in charge of our invasion fleet, and the commanders who are in the field in France, have quite enough headaches with invasion problems and with looking after the safety of their men to the best of their ability without having responsibility for the Prime Minister's safety added

to their worries. It is stated that General Montgomery hung around for the Prime Minister on the beach for over an hour waiting for him to land. Every moment of General Montgomery's time is of priceless value during this crucial period.

Subsequently, during the visit in question, the Prime Minister, General Montgomery, Field-Marshal Smuts, General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and, in all probability, the Supreme Commander and other key men—I notice that the Supreme Commander went over that same day—got into a huddle. I do not think the following would be an unreasonable argument to put before the House: spies or quislings could have got back word that the Prime Minister was around, that he was practically unescorted and that he was located at such-and-such a spot, with a covey of men indispensable to the United Nations—in other words, the target that the Nazi bombers and gunners have dreamed about.

I cannot understand, and I think there are quite a number of people who cannot understand, why in heaven's name the Prime Minister decided to take this trip, fraught as it was with the possibility of so many serious repercussions. I trust that he did not go just for the fun of the ride. Certainly nobody would try to insult the

troops by even hinting that their morale required the visit. The troops were, of course, delighted to see him and, to quote a correspondent who saw him land,

“A Tommy said, with a tinge of anxiety in his face, ‘God help any sniper who gets one near him.’”

Men on the spot knew the danger he was running. In spite of what the Minister of Information might say to the contrary, this was the opinion of our soldiers out there and it is the opinion of quite a number of people at home.

Was his journey really necessary? If not, ought not this House to get an undertaking from the Prime Minister that he will not go off to France again until the factor of risk over there is considerably diminished? The trouble I believe when we get down to it is that when this old war horse smells powder he cannot keep out of the fray. The fighting blood of the Marlboroughs is up, but the Prime Minister must curb his personal feelings, for if ever a man has a duty to mankind in this war it is he. Therefore, he must not take unnecessary risks with his life. I warrant that this is the opinion of millions. He inspired freedom-loving peoples to fight on, and we demand that every human precaution is taken to ensure that now that he has got us the tools he remains the foreman who finishes the job.

PROTEST AGAINST LENGTH OF M.P.s' HOLIDAYS.

House of Commons, 2nd August, 1944.

This is a matter that is of the utmost importance to most Members who have constituencies in Southern England, and it is also of extreme concern to practically every backbencher in this House. I think Members have forgotten that it was Mr. Chamberlain who at the beginning of this war asked Private Members whether they would give up many of their privileges in order, as he put it, that the Government could have for war purposes most of the parliamentary time normally given to Private Members. Circumstances have changed considerably since then. They have changed to the extent that the Government now apparently have so little parliamentary work to do that they are able to send Members away

MR. A. BEVAN (Ebbw Vale): On a point of Order. I think the hon. and gallant Member who is addressing the House is entitled to have Order, and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask hon. Members to show the ordinary courtesy of this House to an hon. Member, even though he may not be popular in certain circles.

EARL WINTERTON (Horsham and Worthing): Further to that point of Order. May I call attention to the fact that through no fault of hon. Members, but owing to the acoustics of this Chamber, the habit of hon. Members of col-

lecting below the Bar, and talking at the tops of their voices, makes it extremely difficult for other hon. Members, and for you, Mr. Speaker, to hear the speech? I do not know whether you, Sir, can make any suggestion on the matter.

MR. SPEAKER: If there is a buzz of conversation beyond the Bar, it makes it very difficult for a Member to make himself heard.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I was drawing attention to what I think the House, if they heard it, will agree was a very important point—that Private Members had their privileges taken away from them for war purposes, but that circumstances have now changed to the extent that the Government have so much parliamentary time on their hands that they are able to dismiss Parliament for one of the longest periods since the war started. It may be of interest to the House to know the length of the Summer Recesses since the war started. In 1940 we had a Summer Recess of two weeks; in 1941 we had $4\frac{1}{2}$ weeks, in 1942 $4\frac{3}{4}$ weeks, in 1943 $6\frac{1}{2}$ weeks and in 1944 we are about to have, apparently, $7\frac{1}{2}$ weeks. I feel the time has come when Private Members should assert their rights and say to the Government, "If now, apparently, you have so much parliament-

any time on your hands that you are able to send us away for so long, then, in fairness, you should return to Private Members all those privileges that have been taken away from them and that take up Parliamentary time." I am referring to the Wednesdays and the Fridays on which Private Members formerly had the chance to bring up matters of their own choosing, the opportunity we used to have of introducing Bills under the Ten Minute Rule, and such like. If the Government does not accede to this request to return Private Members their privileges in the near future, I feel that hon. Members will be entitled to say that it shows quite clearly that the Government have every intention of tricking us out of those privileges and those rights which have been ours from time immemorial.

So much for that. But there is a far more serious aspect to the question that is before the House to-day. We are reaching the climax of the war. Not only London but the whole of Southern England is now in the front line and therefore it is disgraceful that at this time of all times the Government should propose to dismiss the Members of this House for a long period just as if these were the piping days of peace, and to scatter the representatives of the people all over the country. This Motion of the Government makes a mockery of the Prime Minister's statement made recently on the subject

of flying bombs, and I am only sorry that the right hon. Gentleman has had to leave, because I would like to have pointed out to him how he, of all people, should object to this long Recess. He said on that occasion, amid considerable cheers from this House, that the Government were relying on the House of Commons to keep them in close touch with the population affected. How in Heaven's name can we keep the Government in close touch with the population affected by the flying bomb, when the House of Commons will have been dismissed for nearly two months? Even when the House is sitting, every difficulty is put in the way of Private Members bringing up matters concerning the flying bombs, a subject of life and death interest to those who reside in Southern England. From these benches, from time to time, we have asked the Government for an opportunity to debate this matter, but that was resisted, and now we know the reason why it was resisted. The Government realised that if they could fob us off until this long Parliamentary Recess, we would then be muzzled for a matter of two months.

On the particular occasion to which I have made reference, when the Prime Minister had certain statements to make concerning the robot bomb, he went even further than I have already indicated and said, "We can with confidence leave our civil organisation to do their work under the watch-

ful supervision of the House of Commons." Such a pronouncement as that has no meaning whatever when, during this vital stage of the war, there is going to be no watchful supervision by the House of Commons. If we went away for one week or 10 days—I can well understand that hon. Members, anyhow those hon. Members who attend this House, have a right to some respite—that would not be so bad, but to go away for a period of seven and a half weeks is completely inexplicable. I know perfectly well that the spokesmen for the Government will be able to explain it in this way, "Well, after all, we have always had a Summer Recess." That may be so, but that is no reason why at times such as these, we should have such a long Recess. Of course we have always had a Summer Recess, and of course at one time hon. Members have always gone off grouse-shooting on the 12th August. But the past should be no precedent for the present.

Further, we are going to be told that the House can easily be recalled. That is not the point. We members who represent constituencies in the South that are being seriously affected by the flying bomb know that our constituents may be concerned about matters from time to time which it is imperative should be brought up on the floor of the House. We are also well aware from past experience that if you want to get something done, if you

want some redress for your constituency, it is as a rule no good making representations to a private Committee or to the Minister concerned. The best way to do it is on the Floor of the House and, if necessary, to make a row. Unless you can get public opinion behind you by making the public aware of what is being said in Parliament, many Ministers take no notice whatsoever of private representations. Apparently, the Prime Minister appreciated this when he said on that same occasion, that everybody must stay at his post and discharge his daily duty, and he assured the nation—and, I suppose, at the same time our enemies—that the House as a result of the flying bomb, would not leave London. I have no doubt that the bricks and mortar of this House will stay here for the next eight weeks but the inmates, or perhaps I should say the occupants, the supposed civil leaders of the country, are going to leave for the longest period that we have had since the war. What an example to our war workers! What comfort to all those in Southern England who are being menaced by the flying bomb, and, what is more, what an inspiration to the nation as a whole and what laughable satisfaction this is going to give to our enemies!

It was the Prime Minister who said that this House would not leave London during this time of peril and he went on to say that if we did so, private Members in this House

would be "affronted" at the idea. When it comes to the Division Lobby we shall see how many private Members are "affronted." I cannot believe that hon. and right hon. Members who represent constituencies in Southern England and whose constituents have been, or are being, maimed and killed by this vile

Nazi machine, will go into the Lobby and vote that their constituents should be separated from the House of Commons and from the representations that their Members can make on their behalf, for the longest period for which this House has been sent away since the war started.

UNFAIRNESS TO SHOPKEEPERS.

House of Commons, 14th November, 1944.

Thousands of workers who live in the central London area are extremely upset that they may have no opportunity of doing their Christmas shopping. By a Home Office Regulation that comes into force next Monday and continues until 13th January, large numbers of the shops in the central London area will be compelled to close at 4 o'clock. Before I proceed, I would like to apologise for raising this matter at such short notice. It so happened that the Adjournment period to-day had been taken by the hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Hogg), who, for reasons best known to himself, gave it up, and, therefore, the opportunity came my way. The only reason why I have taken it, and have not been able to give longer notice to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport, is because this Regulation comes into force next Monday, and, therefore, it is very unlikely that before then, there will be

another opportunity to raise what to thousands of people is a very urgent matter. While on the subject of the Parliamentary Secretary for War Transport, I should like to thank him for his courtesy in coming down to the House to-day at such short notice. In the same way, I appreciate, like many other hon. Members do, the personal care and consideration he invariably gives from his Department to all inquiries from M.P.s.

This Regulation for the closing of shops in the central London area at 4 o'clock is creating more bad feeling than, perhaps, anything has done for a long time past. How, in Heaven's name, is a worker, who works and lives in central London and whose work takes him or her up to, say, five o'clock or 5.30 p.m., going to get the shopping done when the shops which are available to them close at four o'clock?

I believe that all Departments, including the Home Office, are against this im-

position—all except the Ministry of War Transport, and I understand that the main reason for the objection of that Ministry is this. They say that, unless the hours are staggered, there will be undue congestion. The idea is, I believe, that shoppers and shop assistants shall be able to get back to their homes between 3.30 and 4.30 p.m., and factory workers and others afterwards. The first observation I should like to make is that there are comparatively few factory workers in the central London area, and the second point to which I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend is this. Why, if traffic has worked more or less satisfactorily up to now, is it necessary to change conditions during the next six weeks, and especially over the Christmas period? I suppose that an answer to that would be that, by that means, one could get more people back home by black-out. Why is that necessary? Surely the necessity for this no longer exists to the same extent? I can well understand that, earlier on, it was very desirable for people to get back to their homes, and to what security they could find there, before the black-out, but now the same necessity does not arise.

My experience has been—and I may say that I have already had a considerable amount of representations on this subject, and only to-day there were three deputations in the Lobbies from various

bodies—that what is going to aggravate people more than anything else, more than being congested, as, undoubtedly they may be, is that thousands are not going to have a fair opportunity of doing the shopping for the various necessities of their existence as well as for Christmas. Incidentally, a large proportion of workers in the central London area do not travel, or do not travel very far, because they live in the central London area, and I think that some hon. Members would be amazed if they realised the number of poor people who live in congested areas in my constituency, which is supposed to be one of the richest boroughs in London. Remember, there are thousands and thousands of workers who live in the central London area.

Now from the shops' point of view this regulation is grossly unfair, especially to the small trader. Take, for example, part of my constituency—the Edgware Road. This Regulation is arbitrary to the extent that there will be a collection of shops on one side of the road, which, from next Monday, will have to close at four o'clock, while their competitors on the other side of the road can stay open until the usual time. I have had several small traders come to me and say that this, in effect, means ruin to them. They state that their larger competitors, who may stay open longer, will have the advantage. These people often rely on Christmas trade to

make all the difference between profit and loss. It is a little significant that, at a Conference that was called by the Home Office and took place on the 18th October last, no representatives of the Chambers of Commerce concerned were invited. Surely, they should have been invited?

The London public have

had a grim enough time without unnecessarily ruining their forthcoming Christmas, to say nothing of ruining some small traders. This one-sided Regulation is by no means essential. Therefore, I would make this last minute appeal to the Minister to use his influence to give these poor, hard-pressed people a break.

COUNTING OUT.

House of Commons, 30th November, 1944.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I beg to move, in line 62, at end, add:

“(11) The House shall not be counted during the first half-hour of any debate upon a Motion for the Adjournment made between two Orders of the Day or after the Orders of the Day have been disposed of, or after the interruption of business.”

EARL WINTERTON: On a point of Order. I beg to submit that this Amendment involves an Amendment of Standing Orders and to ask whether an Amendment of a Standing Order should not be put forward as such and not in connection with this Motion?

MR. SPEAKER: I think the Amendment is in Order. The Leader of the House has put down an Amendment to Standing Orders, and surely that Amendment can be amended at the discretion of the House, so long as it is relevant to the main Amendment.

CAPTAIN CUNNINGHAM-REID: I should like in my remarks, and further to that point of Order, to point out that this particular matter does not

appear in Standing Orders at all. I think that is an omission of which the House is not aware. The question of the quorum and the count is not laid down in Standing Orders, though I think it is something which ought to be dealt with in the near future. For that additional reason the Noble Lord's point of Order would fall.

About this time last year I put down a Motion, which was supported by a considerable number of Members, that the daily Adjournment period should be certain, and not an event so precarious that the odds against getting that opportunity worked out at about five to one. The Government, as stated by the Leader of the House to-day, recognised the fairness of our request by altering Standing Orders so that the Adjournment could be taken whenever and however late Government business was completed. Everybody was pleased and all went happily for a time, until it was

made apparent that though practically the whole House desired that Private Members could use this, one of their few remaining privileges, any one Member, animated by frivolous, prejudiced or revengeful motives, could upset the whole apple-cart. Such power resting with one individual cuts right across the rights of Private Members as a whole and makes Parliament ridiculous to the outside world.

This Amendment, which stands in the name of myself and other hon. Members, though it does not exclude a count on the Adjournment under any circumstances, would, at least, ensure that the House could not be counted out for the first half-hour of the Adjournment period, and would enable a private Member anyhow to state his case and receive a reply from the Minister concerned, and Members of the public who were interested in what was being debated could thus hear what was the Member's and the Government's view.

If I could have the attention of my right hon. Friend for one moment, I would say that I feel that this suggestion which is being put forward in the shape of an Amendment, should appeal to the Government's sense of justice, because, as they have taken away from Private Members most of their privileges, they should be anxious that the only worth-while one remaining should not prove to have a false bottom. As things

are now, the Adjournment period can be made abortive by the count, and I would again emphasize that this count or quorum rule is not a rule except by usage. It has become a practice of the House and through some omission has been left out of Standing Orders.

The Amendment does not mean, as I believe some thought it meant, that if, for example, the Business of the day ended at 4 o'clock, we would have a certainty of not being counted out between 4 and 4.30 and then, when at 6 o'clock the Adjournment Motion was formally put again, we would expect another half-hour. We expect only one certain half-hour per day; after that it can be free for all, and anybody who is sufficiently evilly disposed can have count-outs to his heart's content. We only want to have this half-hour assured to us when the Government business, and that which concerns the public's pockets, is completed and there is, therefore, not the same necessity for Members to remain in the House to watch the public's interests.

On the completion of Public Business Members are, naturally, entitled to go home; and, in fact, the majority do so, and it is rarely that on the Adjournment, 40 Members remain in the House, and 40 is the Quorum necessary for the House to continue sitting should Mr. Speaker's attention be called to this deficiency by any one Member. If anybody

in the House wanted to be really bloody-minded he would not have much difficulty under present conditions in counting the House out practically every evening. This could also be done if only for the purpose of demonstrating into what nonsense this rule has developed.

The Quorum rule as it is now understood is wrong. As applied to Government Business, it does not have the effect for which it was originally intended, and I hope on

some other occasion to have an opportunity to going into that aspect of the matter. As applied to Private Members' Business on the Adjournment, this rule is unfair. Anyhow, I ask the Government to improve matters by accepting this Amendment and not allowing to be counted out during the first half-hour of the Adjournment period the few stalwarts who remain in the House at the end of the day.

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